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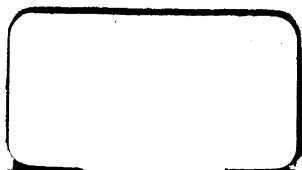
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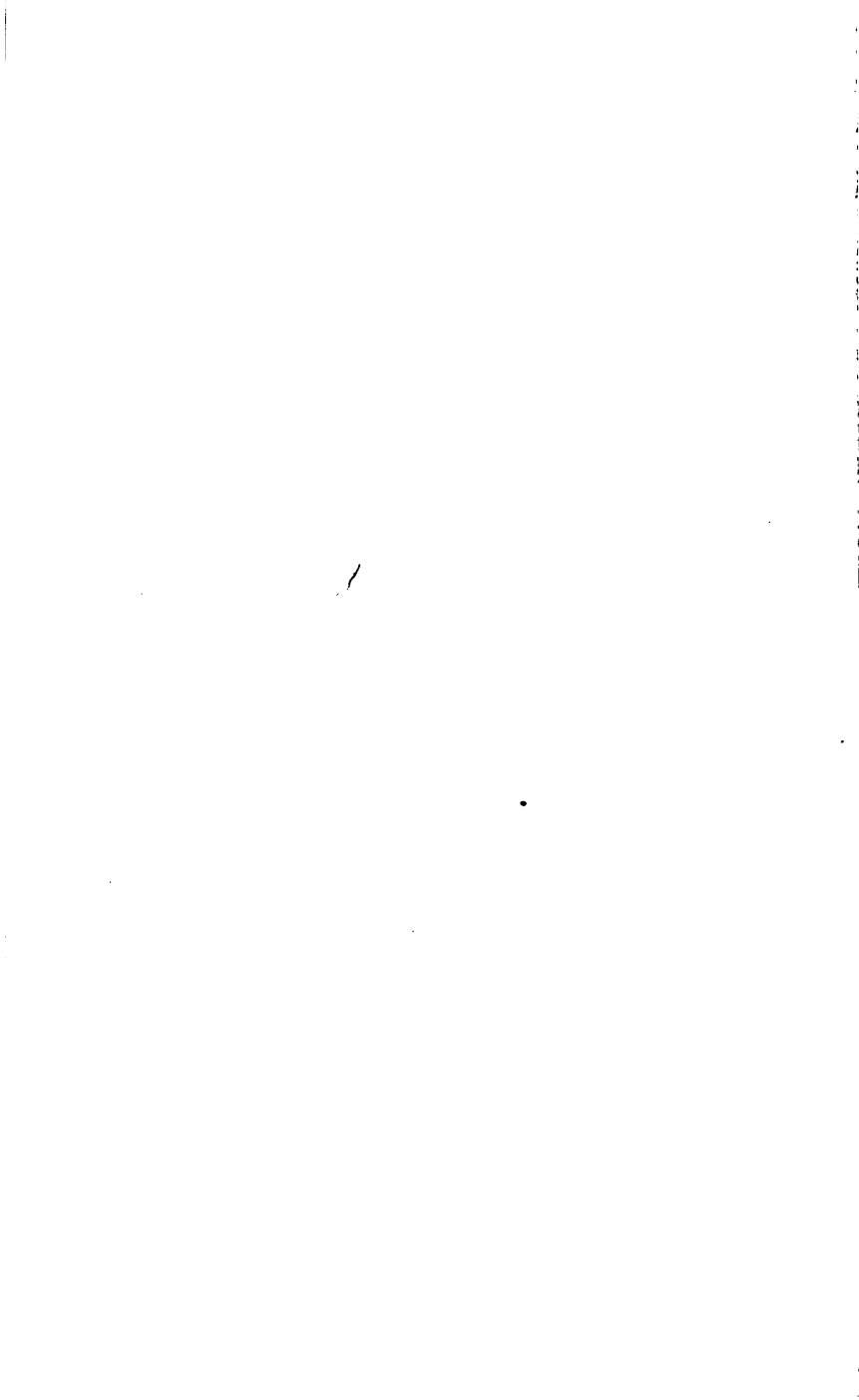


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**EDITH HALE:**

**A VILLAGE STORY.**

BY

**THRACE TALMON,**

*Mrs. Ellen Traylor H. Talmon*

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<sup>in</sup>**BOSTON:**

**PHILLIPS, SAMPSON & COMPANY,**

**NO. 13 WINTER STREET.**

**1856.**

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# EDITH HALE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE STUDENT.

IN the village of Waterbury there were four Gothic cottages standing in a row, and so nearly were they alike in construction and color, it required open-day familiarity, or a careful recollection of some slight peculiarities, to identify one from the other. To one of these was a young girl returning home early on a Saturday evening. She had already passed a handsome mansion, the finest in that vicinity, and which, but a brief while since, had been her own pleasant home.

A deep sigh escaped from her heart, — not so much for the memory of her altered fortunes, as for her afflicted mother, who was all now left to her in the world. She quickened her step, recalling how lonely her mother must be at that hour without her presence, and soon entered one of the cottages, with words of love and encouragement upon her lips.

It was just that time when many persons prefer to waste the moments in the dusky, dreamy uncertainty of twilight,

“ Ere the evening lamps are lighted,”

and, as Edith emerged from the clearer light without into the darkened room, she could discern but imperfectly the figure of her mother, as she thought, sitting in the chair which she usually occupied. Edith believed she was weeping, as she often surprised her of late. Hastening to the side of the chair, she threw her arms about the neck of the one who sat there, and imprinted an earnest, affectionate kiss upon the brow. She now started suddenly, as if she had encountered a peril, and with a voice of affright demanded who was there.

“ Doubtless there is some mistake here,” returned a quiet, manly voice.

“ I thought it was my mother,” said Edith, overwhelmed with confusion. “ What have I done ? ”

“ No harm, certainly ; you might have done worse,” replied the same voice, in a tone of mingled pleasantry and curiosity.

At this crisis, the door of an adjoining room opened, and a lady entered with lights.

“ This is Mrs. Goodwin,” exclaimed Edith. “ I thought, surely, I was in our own home.”

She now saw that the person she had mistaken for her mother was a gentleman, and a stranger. But as he was studying her attentively, she bestowed only a glance. She vainly essayed to summon words for an apology, the tears rushed to her eyes, and she blushed carnation.

"If you have got into the wrong pew for once, it is of no consequence," said Mrs. Goodwin, perceiving nothing but a common mistake in the matter. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Wellmont, who has come to preach for us to-morrow — Miss Hale, a next-door neighbor of ours," she added to the gentleman.

Edith merely bowed in return to Mr. Wellmont's courteous salutation, and moved toward the door to effect her escape as easily as possible.

"Don't leave so soon," continued Mrs. Goodwin, who, being the wife of a deacon, felt it more than usually incumbent on her to press her hospitalities on such an occasion; "Mr. Wellmont would be glad to make your acquaintance, I dare say."

Before the gentleman could add his assent, Edith had excused herself briefly, and vanished like a shadow.

"Beautiful as the angel of a dream!" thought the young minister, when Mrs. Goodwin had left him once more alone.

A new and strange delight filled his soul, and he was even yet inspired with the presence of that mistaken caress. A hundred times, that evening, at least, he imagined his neck encircled lovingly, and his forehead pressed by those warm, rosy lips, which he had seen tremulous with surprise and mortification.

On the next day, which was the Sabbath, the house of worship appeared scarcely less attractive to the people than a flower-garden to insects with parti-colored wings. On every hand they assembled, as if the gate of the temple called Beau-



tiful were newly unclosed. A candidate fresh from the theological institution was expected.

For some time the people had held themselves in readiness for the right one to minister to them in holy things; but, being somewhat cautious in their selection, the situation yet remained open for the ambition of any aspirant.

The fame of the new preacher had preceded him by weeks. They had heard how, while struggling with poverty to obtain an education, he used to sacrifice his pride to self-denial, — wear a straw hat with broken braids, shut himself in his closet to use the needle, walk thirty miles of a night to visit his widowed mother; how, later, he had excelled all his fellow-students in his acquirements, and that for his style, which was wonderfully imbued with that charm which moves all hearts, he had received warm encomiums from certain distinguished men, who declared he was much too fine a fellow to wear a black coat, and go in and out upon the “treadmill of a pulpit,” with the salary of a few hundred a year.

Something of this lingered in the thoughts of many who sat waiting for the opening of the services. Something, too, of the new spring hats and shawls was in the thoughts of many more.

Up a side aisle now came one of those ladies who are to be found more or less over the civilized world. She was a single lady of middle age, and a perfect terror to evil-doers. The children who sat in the pew before her composed themselves into decorum as soon as they heard the rustle of her garments, venting their inward titillation by nudging each

others' elbows, and exchanging glances from the corners of their eyes. Even their elders could not rid themselves of the feeling that they were under the watch-care of Miss Leah, and that she would be first to know it if they dropped off to napping. Altogether, Miss Leah Shaw was such an one as deserves especial prominence among her sex, and it would have seemed befitting to have given her a reserved, central elevation in church, as distinguished worthies sometimes had in Puritan times. She was never so much engrossed with other people, however, as to lose a word of the discourse; and copious notes were taken in a thin, dark-covered book, which she invariably carried to church.

This custom was imitated by another lady of the congregation. She was not single, but a wife without children. It was necessary to mention that she had a husband, else but few would have mistrusted the fact; for Mr. Simon Witherell was a meek man, and shrunk from appearing in his wife's overblowing shadow, except on Sundays, when he walked carefully into church, and, being seated, covered with his hand the side of his face next the head of the pew. In the midst of hard breathing, sometimes he made such an unusual demonstration of his individuality as a sudden spring, when the toe of his boot was jogged unceremoniously by his wife's gaiter. In but one office was he her helpmeet; he carried her notebook to and from church in the dorsal pocket of his coat.

Amid the various reflections of the congregation which cumbered the air of this Sabbath morning, a hush suddenly pervaded the house. The figure of a stranger advanced up

the aisle, and, with a gentle tread, ascended the pulpit steps.

"How handsome he is!" whispered one young lady to another.

"He'll turn half of our young girls' heads," inwardly murmured Deacon Dennis.

The new speaker began to read; his voice was solemn and powerful, but he spoke as though much was still in reserve, and he had a habit of looking about him as unconcernedly as though each new face were but a book on his library-shelves. Miss Leah afterward said of this, that she liked the way of a minister looking about upon the faces of his people, and of all things it made her the most uncomfortable to have a minister look first on one wall and then on the other, on one window and then to the opposite, as though he were trying to spy out cobwebs instead of the sins of the people.

It was soon evident the young man had power. Others had stood in that place before who had aroused and interested their auditors; but now the depths of their souls were moved as though troubled by an angel. Yet he displayed none of the tricks of oratory; made few gestures, but stood like a living statue of Tranquillity, sublimely directing all eyes toward heaven.

"This ere is what I call preachin' the Gospel," said Father Shaw, — father of people in general, and of Miss Leah in particular, — as he left the church at the conclusion of the exercises.

"Yes," said Dr. Humphrey, "the young man has not been too highly recommended, I think."

"Ah!" said Zephaniah Wilkins, who overheard their conversation. "Remember that we must lay hands suddenly on no man; we know nothing of his private character yet. He may prove very unlike what he now appears."

"Well!" responded Father Shaw, "I don't care what you think, but I believe its plaguy hard to counterfeit such goodness as this. I wish to the Lord we had more on 't!"

Zephaniah now shook his head and looked gravely wise. This young man belonged to that peculiar class of persons who go up and down the earth as though they possessed a superior gift of discovering secret sin, as did the Fakir el Kebir when he reported that he caused a lamb to bleat in the stomach of the thief who had stolen and afterwards eaten it.

Edith Hale heard this sermon also, and, as she listened, she forgot all her sorrows, all things save the words of the speaker. But when she left the house of worship, and once more found herself in a world harsh, and chill, and gloomy to her young heart, she thought, —

"Alas! I now feel the breadth and depth of my afflictions in their bitterest reality! My dear father gone forever, my mother and myself in poverty, and to-morrow I must go to the factory to labor for my bread!"

But when her mother inquired of what she had heard, she replied, in a cheerful tone,

"One new idea, out of many, I recall. The preacher

said that on the mountain of Serendib, in Ceylon, grows a red rose about the size of the palm of the hand, upon the leaves of which the Mahometans imagine they can read the name of God and the Prophet. The Christian, he said, should read the name of God upon all his works — as much upon the serpent who but obeyed the impulses of instinct, as upon the fragrant and beautiful rose. And our afflictions, also, should discover this blessed name to us, as well as our joys."

## CHAPTER II.

### A NEW LIFE.

WATERBURY was among the most thriving country towns of New England. Situated at a convenient distance from the metropolis, and possessing many natural as well as factitious resources for business, in a steadily-increasing growth of years it had come to hold a rank in the community not inferior to any of the places in the vicinity.

Through the centre of the village flowed a stream of considerable width, intersected by several mill-dams, over which the water fell like a sheet of silver, broken at its base into a million globules of sheen. In the sunlight each waterfall seemed a cascade of iridescent stones. The central street of Waterbury spanned this stream by a bridge, above which was one of the waterfalls, with its perpetual volume of sound. Further up the stream were little islands, studded with trees or underbrush, which, in the warm season, were very attractive, and suggestive of those fabled isles that are clothed with perennial verdure and delight. Upon the banks stood ancient oaks and elms, often entwined by stout grape-vines, with branches pendent over the water.

On the lower side of the bridge, at some distance, a still expanse of water was bounded to the eye by a factory building, which resembled a huge patch-work of stone. In the evening this water was so radiant with the reflections of brilliant window-panes, that it appeared as if some enchanter had summoned up myriad lights from the halls of a subterranean temple. The low lands below the mill, irrigated by this stream, were very luxuriant, and early in the spring presented a beautiful green most grateful to the eye.

This valley was rich in wild-flowers, which seemed to those who sought for them more lovely and mellow in tint than all others, — as the horses of Nysa, that fed on the beautiful plains of Medea, yielding the best pasturage in the world, are reported by ancient writers to have become cream-colored.

Near the centre of the village stood the only church of the place, which was in the Gothic style of architecture, with a clock upon the base of the steeple, and a dove holding an olive-branch for the weather-vane. Surrounding the church was an extensive and beautiful lawn, skirted with ancient forest and evergreen trees, and enclosed with an iron paling. At some distance in the rear, upon a low hill of a beautiful outline, and dotted thickly with pines, ever aromatic and melancholy in the deep, solemn sighs of the wind, was the place of burial for the dead. The furthestmost base of this hill was skirted by a stream, from which the place derived its name of Riverbank Cemetery. Leading from the village in various directions were the streets, on which were situated, for a long distance, the places of business and homes of

the inhabitants. Some of these were very tasteful, — a few even asserting claim to elegance and rare beauty.

Very early in the morning, before the darkness had fled, the sharp-toned bell of the factory rang.

When Edith Hale heard this bell for the first time as a reminder of her own duty, she rose from her troubled dreams, and, with trembling fingers, arrayed herself as quickly as possible, then fell upon her knees in supplication to God for patience and strength. The words of the Psalmist came into her thought: "In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee, for Thou wilt answer me."

"Dear Edith, be of good courage!" said her mother, folding her shawl more closely about her before she went out; "remember the promises of God to those who put their trust in him." But the mother's tremulous voice betrayed that she had no less need of consolation herself.

Edith was too troubled for words; she threw her arms about her mother's neck, and kissed her with unwonted fervor. A moment she lingered, as if her mother could shield her on her bosom from harsh contact with the world evermore, as she had dreamed in the hours of her childhood, and the answering heart throbbed with a pain more acute than it had ever known before. The most affectionate mother, who parts with her daughter leaving for the distant school, or the tour of travel, or even for that last journey through the dark valley of the shadow of death, knows not such sorrow as the mother of Edith then knew. She had once been a proud woman, born and bred in scenes of affluence and luxury; and



they who have known this pride of life can never wholly forget it, although it may be subdued by the severest ill-fortune, and, more than all, by the spirit of Him who said, "Blessed are the meek." Such souls are like the Phlegraen fields, that appear but a thin crust of earth covering an internal gulf of liquid fire, from which occasionally the flame bursts forth and asserts its power in fearful magnitude and strength. But all the yearnings of the mother's heart availed not; for she was poor, hopelessly poor, and no human arm of support appeared for her high-souled, beautiful child.

Arriving at the factory, whose scenes were unfamiliar, Edith having never been within its walls but once or twice on visits of curiosity, she was stunned by the din so foreign to her sensitive nature. The hundreds of wheels in motion, the complexity of cords, the moving of the wires and great belts, seemed to fascinate the nerves, chords, and sinews, of her own system, and draw them into correspondence of motion.

"I cannot remain here!" she said to herself, looking about her fearfully, and shrinking on to a bench in a dark corner. But the memory of her poverty came to her, and of the high wages offered her by her employer, who, out of friendship, had agreed to give her as much as operatives of a long experience receive; and, by a strong resolution, she drew herself up, and summoned strength to walk forward and ask the overseer to assign her place.

It happened that this man was a coarse, conceited person, who held himself in higher regard than any other, and who was one of that somewhat numerous class that rejoice at

nothing so much as in seeing others "brought down," and heartily engage in assisting at this levelling process. He had often seen Edith, and, since the change in her circumstances, had striven to make her acquaintance; but, perceiving that his society was unpleasant to her, had withdrawn himself from her presence in high sense of offended dignity.

"Want your place, do you, miss?" he repeated, eying her with an air of triumph. "I thought your place was, like shining brass dogs, before the parlor fire! Well, come on, and I'll give you a place where I can keep my eye on ye. We shall be the best of friends bimeby, shan't we?"—and he tapped her familiarly under the chin.

At this rudeness Edith drew back with the air of an outraged queen, while the tears quickly rushed into her flashing eyes. But, commanding her voice, she said, with a tone of authority not to be mistaken, "Sir, never offer such familiarities to me again! If you do, 't will be at your peril!"

"Hoity toity! Does the girl know who I am? I'm your overseer, miss; and 't won't do to have over any of yer high stuff here! You've got to do jest as I say, or lose yer place, — that's all!"

"Has it come to this?" thought Edith. "O, my God! better had it been for me if I had never been born!" But a remembrance of the great Master came over her heart like a breath of cool wind over a parched, blistering, burning desert; of Him whose name is "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father," "Prince of Peace;" but who submitted to be buffeted and crowned with thorns,—and she felt contrition for her rebellion.

In the full light of morning she perceived a small earthen vase on one of the window-seats, in which was growing a fragrant-leaved plant, tipped here and there with the most perfect and delicate white blossoms. It was the care of some loving heart, who strove, even within that noisome, uncongenial sphere, to preserve a resemblance of loveliness and Heaven. Edith gazed upon it as one in a dream. Visions of the past were awakened with the sight of those flowers, till she wept.

"Alas!" she sighed, "how freely did I once enjoy all the blessings which now I so crave! But God has forgotten me; he has left dear mother and myself to struggle with our heavy crosses alone!"

She was aroused by the words of a pleasant voice beside her. "These little flowers toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

Edith turned quickly, and saw the good-natured face of the girl who worked beside her.

"You seem rather down-hearted," she continued. "I don't know much how to comfort anybody like you, for I know little enough for myself; but, if there's anything I can do to help you along here, I'll be merry as a top in doing it."

"Thank you," replied Edith, turning to her work a little more cheerfully; "you have helped me already, by reminding me of that passage which speaks about God clothing the grass of the field, and asks, 'Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?'"

"'T will seem easier in a little while. 'T was very hard to

me, at first; but now I mind nothing about it, unless I want to go somewhere."

"You are very kind; for I am sure I hinder you very much," said Edith, after receiving considerable assistance from the girl.

"O, never mind; and, then, I am glad to help one who has helped me," was the reply.

"How is that?" said Edith. "I don't understand."

"Don't you remember Maria Weston, who used to sit in the seat below you at school? That was me. You showed me a great many times about my lessons; and once, when the teacher, Mr. Gascoe, was about to punish me, and I was half scared to death, you stood right up before the whole school, and, after you had asked leave, you told just how 't was; and it appeared so different, he let me off with only a talking."

"I do remember now," Edith replied, considerably brightened; for nothing is so invigorating as the remembrance of a good deed. "And you are that same girl, then! I thought your countenance was familiar. I think, too, I have seen you in the meetings of our church."

"Yes," said Maria, in a lower tone, apparently disconcerted at this allusion. "I think, sometimes, I ought never to have joined the church," she added, after a pause.

Edith was about to interrogate her respecting this singular confession, when the appearance of the overseer precluded further conversation at that time. He stood at a convenient distance, scrutinizing the face of Edith with great freedom. Presently his attention was transferred to Maria; and, catch-

ing her eye, he winked, drew down his lips with ugly contortions to their furthest limit, then laughed, bending low with the gust of his merriment, and, turning suddenly upon his heel, walked away.

"I tell you what," said Maria, drawing nearer to Edith, "you must look out for Mr. Shattuck, the overseer; he's a queer man, and does some strange things, sometimes."

"I shall never speak to him!" said Edith, curling her lip haughtily.

"That won't do here," said Maria. "You may do such things where you have been, but 'twill go hard to get the overseer out with you in this place. He'll set a great many more against you, and you'll get into all sorts of trouble. You know 'tis the best way to keep in with folks that have power over you, even if 'tis a kind of power you despise."

But it required great self-conflict before Edith could school herself to regard a man like her overseer without utter disgust. As the home of Edith was some distance from the factory, she did not return to breakfast; in the interval of labor, she ate a slice of cold bread and meat which she had brought with her. But the hours of the long forenoon lagged wearily. Her heart ached in the great change to which she was subjected. Weary to faintness, and dizzy with the incessant noise of the machinery, she felt at times ready to sink down, and resign herself hopelessly to her untoward fate.

Often her thoughts wandered far away from her task. A glimpse of the trees down in the meadow, as she passed a window, recalled how pleasantly a similar spring day had been

spent but one year ago. Her parents rode with herself out to a farm where some friends lived, two or three miles distant; and she was as happy as her heart could be in rambling over the hills, gathering wild-flowers, and then sitting down to the dinner,—the delicious dinner of early cowslips, meats, bird's-nest pudding,—and the fragrant coffee afterward. And her plays with the merry children up in the large, unfinished attic, her hidings among the barrels of beans and peas, and the grand high swing in the barn; the search for the hens' nests, and the examination of the first brood of chickens; and the visit to the old curbless well, where all were first scared and afterwards made merry by the harmless slip of one of the number into the loose soil at the very brink. And then the good, long talk on the way homewards with her father—the father who never was to her aught but affection!

Now, her only prospect was this work in the factory; to go home and find her mother desolate, her father gone forever! To sit down to the scanty meal, every mouthful of which she should grudge herself as so much deducted from what they were trying to save; and then to hasten back again and repeat, day after day, this same heart-sickening labor, which tugged at her heart-strings!

At this crisis of her reflections, her attention was attracted to some visitors who now entered the room, a gentleman and two ladies, dressed very showily. They were conversing together gayly; and, as they walked toward where Edith stood, she heard one of the ladies exclaim, in a loud voice, to the gentleman,

"O, what a nice place to get used to noise! But here are some pretty girls — pretty for low people, you know."

"Very passable," replied the gentleman, glancing searchingly about him. "But let us speak lower; they may hear us, and 'twill do them no good."

"Get above themselves," said the lady, laughing aloud.

"Which would be a great pity," continued the gentleman; "for some are born to work, you know. We are made to differ."

"I should think so," said one of the ladies, now looking thoroughly contemptuous at the plain dresses of the operatives, and gathering the folds of her heavy Cashmere shawl more closely about her. This last speaker was the wife of the gentleman; the other lady a visitor from the city, who had a curiosity to see the inside of a factory-building. As they came up before Edith, she recognized the man in an instant of sharp, bitter pain. It was Mr. Tyng, for whom her late father had lost all his estate, and finally died of grief at the sudden weight of misfortune. Edith saw that he was clad in the finest broadcloth, and wore a heavy gold chain, from which were suspended several charms of value.

"We must hurry a little," said he, looking at his large gold watch; "it is now eleven, and the horses are engaged at half-past. But who is this? I think I have seen her somewhere," he now suddenly observed to the overseer.

"That is Edith Hale, the daughter of Blanchard Hale, who died some months ago."

"Possible?" he exclaimed, his lips whitening. As he ven-

tured one more look, their eyes met. That glance! On the one side it was the keenest reproach; on the other, a cowering shame, which was quickly succeeded by an accustomed assurance.

It was recalled years afterward, when next they met, in another place!

"Did n't you know that man?" inquired Maria, as soon as the visitors had passed on.

"I did but too well," replied Edith, her whole frame trembling with emotion.

"I worked in his family once when his wife was sick," said Maria; "he talked all sorts of stuff to me, and said I was the handsomest girl he ever saw."

Edith now looked at Maria with astonishment. But Maria laughed lightly, saying,

"You need n't look so awfully severe; more than one man has said that to me, and it did n't harm me, either."

"Maria," said Edith, very seriously, "you know not what you mean when you say such words as those from a gentleman do you no harm. They are the words of the tempter, and I warn you away from that horrible gulf into which they lead."

"He did n't speak to me to-day," said Maria, a little sobered; "but he would if his wife had n't been with him. He used to make a great deal of me, and has carried me to ride several times, when Mrs. Tyng was away on a visit to her father's. But I don't think I shall ride with him again, if he asks me."



"O, no, dear Maria!" said Edith, with unusual fervor; "don't do anything that has even the appearance of evil. Those who are poor have nothing but their good name; and a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

"'Dear Maria!' that sounds odd from one like you, Miss Edith; but I suppose, after all, you did n't mean anything by it," said Maria.

"Indeed I did," replied Edith. "You have been kind to me, to-day," and her voice faltered; "and, if you had not, I should wish to befriend you in such a matter as this."

They were interrupted by the sudden weight of a hand upon the shoulder of each. Both looked around simultaneously, and saw the broad, dark face of the overseer between them, grinning and ogling, as if writhing with internal serpents. Edith moved aside in an instant; but Maria stood still and laughed heartily.

"That lady has n't learnt to take a joke," he said to Maria, at the same time passing his arm around her neck. Maria looked toward Edith, not because she wished to, but she was drawn toward her by an impulse irresistible and new. She saw Edith's eye was filled with sorrow and kindly reproof, and it was impossible to withstand that look. She moved away from the man, pretending something about her work was going wrong.

"You seem dreadfully squeamish about trifles," remarked Maria to Edith, when they were again left by themselves.

"Such things are not trifles to me," answered Edith.

"Well, there are plenty of folks that do hold them so,"

persisted Maria, with spirit; "and good folks, too. I've seen church-members tucking round other women than their wives, out in public; and I've seen 'em kissing, as though there warn't no more in it than talking. And, if such people do such things and go scot free, I should like to know why I can't? Is it because I'm a poor factory-girl?"

"Shall we sin because we think others do?" asked Edith, much troubled for an answer; for she knew the allegations of the girl were not far from the truth. "The Master whom we profess to follow has said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' and his example and words only should we receive for imitation and obedience."

"I never thought much about all this before," said Maria; "and I am sure I thought I could do what others do, who are called such good people."

"But did your mother never teach you about these things?" inquired Edith.

"My mother's dead," said Maria, in a subdued voice. "She died when I was a mere child, and I can't hardly remember her; though I just recollect that I was lifted up over the coffin, and how I cried because she would n't speak to me."

"Have you no sisters?" pursued Edith.

"None older than I. My father has got a second wife, and I have got two half-sisters. Father is a still man, and never says anything only the least that can be said: and my mother-in-law seems just like a stranger. She's very nice and particular about all our work, though; and, if we don't do everything to suit her the first time, we have to do it all

over till we can suit her, and we don't get any praise, then. But she never tells me anything how to behave with people."

"Poor girl!" thought Edith. "How much poorer is she than myself, with the blessing of my dear, excellent mother! And I have been repining, while she is happy! Heaven forgive my ingratitude!"

## CHAPTER III.

### EXPLORING EXPEDITION.

AMONG Mr. Wellmont's earliest secular appointments was that of visiting some of the families in the parish, that he might be able to judge more definitely of the people, and the people of him, than in the restraints of public exercises.

As he was a stranger to almost every family, Mr. Solomon Acre, a young man who abounded in leisure, respectability, and gossip, volunteered his services in accompanying Mr. Wellmont, and making his way easier by introductions, explanations, and illuminations. Mr. Solomon was a nephew of the gentleman with whose family Mr. Wellmont was stopping indefinitely, till a boarding-place could be procured. A slight acquaintance had, therefore, been formed between them, which made this arrangement mutually pleasant and beneficial.

"As we are near one of the principal parishioners," suggested Mr. Solomon, in the outset, "we may perhaps as well call first as last, though it may not prove a very pleasant business."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Wellmont, suddenly interested.

"The man is Father Shaw, an odd sort of person; and, ten chances to one, he may put you some questions which

may prove offensive. But I suppose you are one of those," said Mr. Solomon, reverently, "to whom the Psalmist refers, when he says, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.' We all think a good deal of the old man, though," he continued, "because — I can't exactly tell why — only he is rich and honest, and tremendously plain-spoken."

Mr. Wellmont smiled a little peculiarly, but made no observation. They entered the yard, which was enclosed by a hedge of thorn-bush, with tall shrubs inserted at equal distances in imitation of posts, and came in full view of a staid-looking house, without the slightest pretensions to decoration, but simply substantial and regular. In each corner of the yard was a tall, scragged elm, under one of which stood a row of bee-hives, partly shaded also by a scrubby apple-tree. Everything was prim to a pain, and there was no trace about the homestead of its ever being garnished with flowers, vines, or pretty shrubs. The path to the door was laid with broken stones, and the sharp, grinding sound of their contact with the tread seemed the key-note to the whole life-chords of the spot. Saving this, there was no sound of life about the premises; it seemed like a deserted home on Sunday.

This homestead, standing amid the stylish modern residences of the village, Mr. Wellmont likened in his mind to an old book, ponderous and discolored by long use, within a row of new volumes, elegantly bound in morocco and russia, muslin and gilt, late from the press of the "enterprising publisher."

Mr. Solomon having tapped delicately with his slender cane twice and thrice, gaining strength with each repeated effort, the door was at last opened by Miss Leah, whose tall, august figure, sharp features, and keen, searching eye, struck Mr. Wellmont as the impersonation of vigor. "People may hate me, if they only fear me," said a Roman tyrant; and the expression of Miss Leah seemed not greatly remote from this.

Mr. Solomon was evidently afraid of her, and ventured to look up and within, like a cat through a door ajar, into which a passport is no every-day matter; but he smiled and tried hard to feel at home and on the best terms with the lady, to whom, stepping one side and waving his hand spasmodically, he presented the candidate for Waterbury pulpit.

Miss Leah returned the salutation of Mr. Solomon with an air of condescension, looked steadily at Mr. Wellmont for a minute, then offered her hand with great cordiality; for ministers were a class to which she confessed inferiority — and ministers alone. They were conducted within the parlor with alacrity, for Miss Leah was a little excited. She drew up the largest arm-chair for Mr. Wellmont, directed Solomon to a common chair with her forefinger, then excused herself to speak to her father.

"A little odd is Miss Leah, you see," observed Mr. Solomon, in a confidential tone; "but she's a remarkable woman for management, indeed, — quite equal to half a dozen ordinary women, or men, for that matter. The young folks fear her more than her father. As the poet says,

' Peculiar, therefore, is her way ;  
Whether by nature taught  
I shall not undertake to say,  
Or by experience bought.' "

Mr. Solomon was very fond of introducing what " the poet says," as people with a romantic temperament, spiced with a little oddity, usually are.

Mr. Wellmont glanced about him, and saw that the room wore the same aspect as did Miss Leah. The furniture was large, odd, and old-fashioned. The chairs were straight, high-backed, and trimmed with brass nails, reminding one of those seats in the days of chivalry, on which duennas were obliged to sit erect all night, that they might be kept awake to watch their youthful mistresses. The carpet was of a pattern like a draught-board, in black and brown ; and the light was but partially admitted between green and white curtains, so that everything wore a sickly and gloomy aspect. A single picture hung upon the sombre-papered wall ; it was the " Destruction of Sodom," in which the mass of falling flame was the most prominent feature. Several figures of a revolting aspect were ranged along the chimney-piece, on nearing which, Mr. Wellmont discovered, by means of marked slips of pasteboard pinned to their pedestals, they were intended to represent the Persian divinities, Ormuzd and Ahriman, the Egyptian Eikton and a Hindoo Vishnu. Upon the table were several numbers of the Missionary Magazine, a memoir of a celebrated divine, and a kind of fancy article, which Mr. Solomon observed, but could not make out.

Presently Miss Leah reappeared, followed by her father, whom she presented with the air of a Persian satrap giving orders to his troop. Mr. Wellmont's wandering thoughts were instantly recalled by the words, "Solomon! you well?"

Solomon having replied submissively, the old man turned to Mr. Wellmont, and said, "Do you wish to be called Reverend?"

"I am not yet entitled to that appellation; and, if I were, I am not ambitious for any such distinction," Mr. Wellmont replied.

"I wanted to know," said Father Shaw, "for ministers are amazin' puffed up now-a-days;—I tell 'em they're like young wasps—the largest when they're first hatched!"

"Father!" now exclaimed Miss Leah, looking extremely serious.

"What say?" replied the old man bluntly, and apparently insensible to the implied reproof.

"The apostle says, 'Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor,'" remarked Miss Leah.

"But the Bible don't say anywhere that ministers should be called Reverend," continued Father Shaw; "it's an honor given only to God—'Holy and reverend is his name.'"

"It is a title given to ecclesiastics by long-established usage, I believe," said Mr. Wellmont, who felt that he was expected to say something.

"Yes, yes," returned Father Shaw, "and it comes from



priestcraft. It comes from the Catholics; they call their abbés, and priors, and what not, *reverend fathers*; and their abbesses, and prioresses, and monkesses, *reverend mothers*. It's a shame to our Christian church to follow after such abominations! It's all Babylon! I s'pose you think you're divine, too!"

"Why do you make that inquiry?" said the minister-elect.

"'Cause, if you ministers don't think you are, why do ye call one another *divines*, I should like to know?"

"That, also, is a custom sanctioned by the use of ages," replied Mr. Wellmont.

"Well, and it comes from witchcraft; familiar spirits and wizards that peep and mutter, which books call divination. There's but one being that's divine — God; but there are a good many prophets who pretend to tell the future, and call themselves divines. People make a great fuss about the Catholic mummery; but we had better look to home afore we find fault with others."

"So I believe, in your own case," thought Mr. Wellmont.

"Father is in the habit of saying just what he thinks," observed Miss Leah, apologetically; "but those who know him never take it ill of him."

"It's no use," said Mr. Solomon, carefully.

"I don't care whether folks git mad or not, if I only tell the truth," said Father Shaw.

Miss Leah now introduced a topic of conversation which she thought would be more agreeable to the stranger's feel-

ings. But Father Shaw soon interrupted them, without circumlocution, by inquiring of Mr. Wellmont how long he had been studying.

"During the usual time prescribed for a student of theology," replied Mr. Wellmont, striving to conceal his impatience while going through this introductory course of inquisition.

"Do you think it's all done you any good?" continued the old man.

"That has been my object," said Mr. Wellmont; "but I do not wish to constitute myself a judge of my success."

"Well, I don't think it has. The apostles were most all fishermen; and do you think, with all your fine learning, you can preach as well as they did? The best preachin' comes when it's moved by the Spirit, and by a fiery zeal for the salvation of men; when it can't be kept back, more than the powder down in a hole in a rock can be kept from going off, after a coal of fire is dropped on't. Such preachers tell of a salvation without money and without price; they don't sell it for a pew-tax a year. This ere larnt preachin' is no more like the real Gospel preachin' than anything else gut up is like the nat'ral. You see, the last time I went to Boston, where my son lives, he got me to go and see a —— what is that are show called, Leah?"

"Panorama, father; you know I told you how to remember, by the association of a milk-pan and 'in Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping.'"

"There was a Panorama of the Creation," continued the old man, "where they had Adam and Eve, Noah and the

ark, and all that, pictured out as big as life a'most; I dare say you've seen 'em. Well, they made thunder there and rain that sounded like rollin' grind-stones, and throwin' down bushels of beans on sheet-iron, and it warn't no more like real thunder and rain than this new-fangled preachin' is alongside the apostles' preaching."

"But, Father Shaw, I heard you say, last Sabbath, you liked the sermons of our new minister 'amazin' well,'" now interposed Mr. Solomon.

"Well, so I did; and I han't said anything to the contrary to-day, have I?"

"You have come pretty near it, it seems to me," said Mr. Solomon.

"I did n't say this ere young man's preachin' is such trash that's like a soundin' brass and tinklin' cymbal we hear so much on these days. I said I did n't think his larning done him any good, and I stick to 't," said Father Shaw.

• This way of beginning acquaintance, by showing the hard side uppermost, was characteristic of the old man. His friendship was like wine, acrid and unpalatable at first, but improving and mellowing by age.

"A pity you had n't tried and kept old Mr. Walsh here; he had n't learning enough to hurt him," observed Mr. Solomon, facetiously.

"I don't think it is a pity," said Miss Leah; "he was too headstrong for me. When I asked him to preach on some subjects which burdened my mind, he laughed in my face, and said what was quite unbecoming a minister of the Gospel."

"He said women should n't meddle with what didn't belong to 'em; but they should larn of their husbands at home," concluded her father, unmercifully.

Mr. Wellmont now looked at his watch, and observed to Mr. Solomon that, as they had many more calls to make that day, he thought they would leave.

"Not yet," spoke Father Shaw, in a tone of command; "I've somethin' more to say. Young man, if you think of settlin' here, you'll find me one of your best friends, provided you do about right. Now, you think, no doubt, I'm very uncomfortable, and e'enamost a heathen; but I've got a heart, nevertheless, that's true as steel, when it takes a notion. I pity you; I pity all ministers of these days; for they've a dreadful hard time on't, to please folks."

"Yes, that indeed," interrupted Mr. Solomon; "modern ministers can say, with Pope:

'What would you have me do  
When out of twenty I can please not two!  
One likes the pheasant's wing, and one the leg—  
The vulgar boil, the learned roast an egg.'"

"Solomon, stop till I git done, then you may say over your stuff as long as you want to. I say ministers have a hard time, and it's 'cause they try to do what they ought to leave undone, and they leave undone what they ought to do. And they're too strung up, being jealous of what folks think on 'em, and with hatin' more'n lovin'. I knew a minister once who seemed to set by no varse in the whole Bible so

much as by that one where David said, 'I hate mine enemies with a perfect hatred.'"

"I knew him, too," said Mr. Solomon; "and he had enemies enough who hated him."

"Hold your tongue, Solomon! Now, just preach Christ and him crucified," continued Father Shaw. "Visit the widow and the fatherless, and keep yourself unspotted from the world. Then don't worry about anything or anybody; but love everybody, and think everybody loves you, and 'cordin' to your faith 't will be unto you."

"Thank you," replied the minister-elect, dryly; and there was an expression upon his face which was not wholly peace.

"Well," concluded the old man, as they rose to leave, "if we think of keeping you here, and you get into trouble in mind or money, jest you come to me, and I'll help you out if I can."

In another tone did Mr. Wellmont now express his gratitude; and it would not have puzzled a child to have seen that he heard this gladly.

When they had fairly left the house, and gained the open air, Mr. Wellmont took a long breath; and the charm with which the ministry had always been invested to him seemed now changed into a curse. He murmured to himself, "A Fetish priest, who bears about in the streets of African towns a club hung with strings of cowries, broken combs, bits of iron, brass, and nut-shells, is more to be envied and admired than myself, thus going from house to house in a New England parish." But, as he thought of this passage,

"Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," he smiled involuntarily, and, in a cheerful voice, inquired of his companion to what family he designed next to introduce him.

"You observe this fine house at our right," said Mr. Solomon. "It is the residence of Mr. Pickering and his family, which consists of a wife and several daughters. They are some of our most stylish people, and are as different from Mr. Shaw and Miss Leah as rainbows are unlike blocks of Quincy granite. We will call here next, if you please."

Within this house they were admitted by a smart, flippanant house-maid, who bowed familiarly to Mr. Wellmont, talked with Mr. Solomon as to an old acquaintance, and excused herself from the parlor to speak to "Miss Pickering and the girls." After considerable delay the lady of the house appeared, dressed in an extremely youthful mode, although the wrinkles of her face betokened she had seen at least fifty winters. In a high flow of spirits she greeted Mr. Wellmont, and widened the folds of her silk dress, as she seated herself on the sofa beside him, with an air which expressed, "I'm the happiest creature in the world to see you." To all Mr. Wellmont's observations she smiled graciously, and made a great many little rejoinders expressive of her thorough appreciation; and often she seemed to anticipate his words, before they could be uttered, with exquisite demonstrations of pleasure. Her presence had suddenly filled the room with a trifling, buzzing sound, as when a glittering, fluttering fly

comes in on a warm summer day. Naturalists tell us that a fly walks with equal ease upon a surface rough or smooth, upon the ceiling as upon the floor, on account of a *vacuum* produced by certain organs attached to the foot; and, on a similar principle, substituting the word *head* for foot, it might be accounted for, that whatever topic of conversation, whether deep or shallow, lively or grave, was introduced in the presence of Mrs. Pickering, she always skimmed along with her usual vivacity, apparently never troubled with apprehensions of her incapacity, as one of sounder intellect and more weight of character might have been. She never, indeed, advanced ideas requiring the least depth of reflection; but, by a variety of gestures and rarefied nothingnesses, she appeared to share largely in the conversation.

Presently appeared three young ladies, in the most attractive grouping imaginable, suggestive of the three Graces, or, of the three goddesses, who were metamorphosed into poplars.

Celesta, the eldest, was presented by Mrs. Pickering as "our book-worm." The second daughter, Claudine, whose name had been modernized from Lucinda, was designated as "the artist." And the third, Julia, as "the musician."

Mr. Wellmont was soon overwhelmed with conversation, by "the book-worm," upon the latest popular novels; while Mr. Solomon was engrossed by Claudine in the inspection of a portrait which she had just completed. It being the likeness of a rival admirer of the young lady, Mr. Solomon was unsparing in his criticisms; and, falling into a lively dispute,

he soon proposed to Mr. Wellmont to take their leave, which that gentleman was not at all unwilling to do.

Mrs. Pickering pressed her hospitalities extremely, and hoped Mr. Wellmont would quite make their home his own. "At least," she added, "if you remain here, which I do not doubt, as we are all in love with you already."

When out of the presence of these ladies, Mr. Solomon fell into a fit of abstraction, and seemed suddenly to have lost all his communicativeness; but, arousing himself at some observation of his companion, he said, as if concluding a reflection, "After all, she is just as different from the rest as an *aurora borealis* is from the light of a common lamp."

"Of whom are you speaking?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"A thousand pardons, sir! I had nearly forgotten in whose presence I was, while I fell into a stream of reminiscence which was 'moving on with a brown, brown current,' as the poet says. In short, I was in a brown study, and speaking of Lucinda," replied Mr. Solomon, with some confusion.

"The Miss Pickering presented as Claudine?"

"Yes; but her original name was Lucinda; — a good, sensible name it was, and one which I liked vastly, because she was a very different girl, and infinitely more charming, before her name was changed. They thought Claudine sounded more romantic, I suppose. But I lay all such things to the mother, and the lackadaisical book-worm."

"I infer," said Mr. Wellmont, "from this young lady's being styled 'the book-worm,' that she is a remarkable reader."



"Yes, of novels; but I perceive no indications of those 'looks,' to which, the poet says,

'Is sacrificed the dinner for the books.'"

"The father of these young ladies, — I think you mentioned him favorably?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"Yes; Mr. Pickering is sound every way; but he makes a slave of himself for his family. He began life poor and friendless, and has had to make a hard, strong effort to rise in the world. But he has risen, so that men who have three times the learning and 'finified' stuff about them go to him for his judgment in business matters, and think highly of him, not only for his good sense, but for his generosity; for he's got a heart in him as large as a bushel-basket; and he makes no more of doing for the poor, and helping on public improvements, than some of us make of doing for ourselves. But the way his wife and children (at least, all but one or two) do spend his money! — as if the dollars grew like huckleberries, and had n't been hammered out of his brain and bone and sinew! One would think they never knew there was such a thing as work. And to see the airs they put on over people! — at least, all but Lucinda, who would be more sensible if she could, — and one other, a mere cipher in the family."

"In what respect?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"O, they never make anything of her, and avoid all allusion to her, as though she were an idiot, or some poor unfortunate who was a disgrace to them, because she is so plain in her looks, and won't be drilled into any of their nonsense.

They keep her out of sight as much as they can, and now she is sent away among relations at a distance. When she is at home she will go to church ; and, foul or fair, you are sure to see Mary Pickering in her place beside her father. He seems to think more of her, and would have things different if he could ; but, in all such matters, his wife and Celesta set the copy, and the rest have to write after. After all, a good many in the village like Mary the best of the whole ; but they are of the second set, and it is because she always does so much for them. Lucinda is the belle among our upper ten."

Mr. Wellmont now directed the attention of his companion, with apparent indifference, to the cottage in which he was beginning to be interested.

"That," said Mr. Solomon, "is the home of Mrs. Hale, a widow lady, and her only daughter, Edith. The death of Mr. Hale, a most devoted husband and father, and the loss of their fortune a short time since, has left them in deep affliction. Their life is wholly changed, and I heard that Edith went into the factory this week ; but, for all that, she is as pretty a girl as there is here in town, except, it may be, Lucinda Pickering."

Mr. Wellmont looked steadfastly away to prevent the discovery of a smile at the repeated mention of "Lucinda ;" and, to conceal his sensations, proposed that they should call at the cottage.

Mr. Wellmont found Mrs. Hale a middle-aged, sensible-looking woman, with that subdued expression which betokens

familiarity with sorrow and sacrifice; one of that rare class who, from superior cultivation of mind and the richest graces of the heart, are dignified without severity, self-possessed without assurance, and self-denying without servility. In earlier days of ease and pleasantness she had been beautiful; now she seemed almost saint-like in her love and matronly care.

“Such a bearing is never the result of uninterrupted prosperity,” thought Mr. Wellmont. Mrs. Hale was in feeble health; it was evident from the frequent cough and the hectic flush which came to her cheek at the least excitement; but how cheerful and serene she was amid all her sorrows! — as though she could even then see the glory that is prepared for the faithful who endure to the end. Her surroundings were simple and poor; but all bore the evidence of a culture which was a mystery to Mr. Wellmont. The fact of former wealth did not account for an indescribable air of refinement and superiority which Mrs. Hale cast about her without effort or pretension. There were no remnants of better days, no costly appliances of artificial elegance, to assist this impression. The windows were only graced with a few modest plants, and plain muslin curtains, put back upon common nails; but with an effect, indeed, unexcelled by costliest damasks. The easy-chair was covered with patch; the carpet was inexpensive, and much worn, but scrupulously neat; and the little table, of a curious, old-fashioned pattern, was unadorned, save with a few choice religious books. As Mr.

Wellmont glanced about him, with a subdued heart, he said to himself, "Peace be to this house!"

Mrs. Hale put by her work, upon which her bread depended, and by degrees became engaged in conversation, forgetting her situation; and, as if transported to former prosperity, was blessed and blessing, as of old, with all the strength and brilliancy of her highly-cultivated mind. But, when Mr. Solomon inquired for Edith, her face paled, and her voice slightly trembled, as she replied, "She is away at work in the factory. I miss her sadly, now."

"I thought her health was never strong," remarked Mr. Solomon. "How can she endure such an effort?"

"I fear her health was never more delicate than now," replied the mother, the tears suffusing her eyes; "but she never complains, and says the exercise will be beneficial. It is a great change for one so young."

"She has always been accustomed to school, and very carefully nurtured," remarked Mr. Solomon to Mr. Wellmont, by way of explanation.

"Our object is," said Mrs. Hale, "to acquire means to enable Edith to become a pupil of the academy again, that she may be fitted to become a teacher. I should have preferred her taking some way less laborious and trying than this; but she seemed so anxious to lose as little time as possible, I was induced to consent to her entering the factory, where more could be earned in a given time than in any other situation which offered."

"You have my most earnest wishes for success, Mrs. Hale,"

responded Mr. Wellmont, earnestly; for he was one easily touched with a feeling for others' woes.

"Thank you. I think we shall succeed in this undertaking, unless her health should fail," continued the mother. "She studies now till late in the night, in order to progress as fast as possible; but, as she cannot proceed much further to equal advantage without a teacher, I am hoping to give her a pleasant surprise, by producing money enough to enable her to enter school by the autumn term. Excuse me, however," she added; "I should not allow such matters to engross the attention of another. I find myself too frequently betrayed into inconsistencies by the influence of my changed manner of life."

"No apology is necessary, madam," replied Mr. Wellmont, with fervor. "I feel an interest in yourself and your daughter; and if I can be of any service to you while I remain here, I shall be happy to give it."

"Fortunate Edith is so young!" thought Mr. Solomon, who was fertile in suggestions. "He would never think of marrying her, though, now she is so poor, if she were old enough to be a minister's wife."

"I have engaged board here for a few weeks, with the family of Deacon Dennis," continued Mr. Wellmont, in reply to Mrs. Hale's expressions of gratitude; "and, meantime, if your daughter wishes assistance in her studies, I will cheerfully instruct her. I shall be at liberty on Tuesday and Friday evenings after this."

Other visits were made by Mr. Wellmont on that afternoon,

so that he gathered considerable knowledge of the people to whom he was introduced. But the day waned, and a chill spring wind arose with the nightfall, which, with the moisture of the atmosphere, peculiarly affected a temperament like that of Mr. Wellmont.

He went to a new boarding-place, and was shown to his room, where no cheerful fire awaited him, with the home accompaniments of the arm-chair, the dressing-gown and slippers, arranged by some loving hand ; but, though bearing the distinction of the best guest-chamber, it was drear, precise, and stately enough to recall all the sad associations of a lifetime. But, at the summons of the tea-bell, a pleasant vision flitted before him ; and, with a hopeful smile, he descended to the parlor. He found a table laid with covered dishes, around which, at their several chairs, stood Deacon Dennis, his wife, and daughter Alitha, and two children. By request, Mr. Wellmont invoked a blessing, in which he thanked Heaven for the bountiful provision of Providence, by which the miracle of life was daily renewed ; and prayed that spiritual food might also be given to nourish and strengthen the soul, which liveth forever.

Much of the true impulses of one's heart may be discerned from the hospitalities of his table ; the generous man distributes from his bounty with a free hand. Deacon Dennis was one of the wealthiest citizens of Waterbury. He had inherited wealth, acquired much more by his own efforts, and received wealth by his wife. Wealth seemed naturally to adhere to him, as it does to a class of persons of a peculiar

organization, whose touch, like Midas', transmutes everything to gold. He was what is termed one of the pillars of the church; for, not only did he discharge the duties of his ecclesiastical office with order and promptitude, and render cringing service to all ministers of his own faith in whose way he fell, but he gave liberally to missionary and educational societies. Rarely was he seen to throw in less than a bank-bill to the contribution-box, and his name figured often in the religious paper of his denomination as the donor of sums to constitute various persons life-members of these societies. But Deacon Dennis was one of those persons who think every thing eaten is so much utterly wasted; and so the provision for "the daily miracle of life" was scarcely "bountiful," even when his board was graced by the presence of a clergyman. He believed with the Mahometan crier, who says, when he announces the hour of prayer, "Praying is better than food."

Mrs. Dennis, and the oldest daughter, Alitha, were particular to have all their domestic arrangements as faultless, in neatness and order, as possible. The table was always covered with the snowiest linen, and the glass, china, and silver, were radiant with the polish of cleanliness. But the few dishes were scantily provided, and that with substances but poorly fitted to sustain the strength of active, vigorous people, who did not design to take life in homœopathic doses. The prospect to Mr. Wellmont was but little superior to the eating of the fairies in Herrick's *Hesperides*:

“ A little mushroom-table spread;  
After short prayers, they set on bread,  
A moon-parched grain of purest wheat,  
With some small glittering grit, to eat  
His choicest bits with ; then, in a trice,  
They make a feast less great than nice.”

Notwithstanding he had secret hopes of some time attaining greatness, and knew that great men were oftenest perfectly indifferent to what they ate, he had a keen sense of the luxury of good, plain, and plentiful food ; and, being one who made great and repeated mental and bodily exertions, it was his conviction that such food was indispensable to his health. By some indefinable impression, he had an uncomfortable feeling, also, that every mouthful he consumed came under the eye of the master or mistress of the house, and that they remembered its exact cost. He saw the two boys, who sat opposite him, pass their plates for renewal with a lurking fear and want of confidence, as if they had been in the habit of being refused, but thought, in the presence of a stranger, they might venture without peril ; and, occasionally, when the deacon was engrossed in conversation, they slipped off a bit from the plates nearest them to their own, with great celerity and caution. Mr. Wellmont, however, was not disposed to be scrupulous at everything which did not exactly coincide with his preferences ; and, secretly wishing that his home was in a certain brown cottage, where the social atmosphere was so much more agreeable, he put on a cheerful face, and determined to make the best of whatever came in his way.



This commendable reconciliation was not a little assisted by frequent calls upon Mrs. Hale, for whom, at every interview, his respect increased. Unluckily, he saw but little of Edith, who, was seldom present on these occasions; for she could not readily overcome the mistake which had signalized their introduction. At last, Mr. Wellmont persuaded her mother to promise that she should accept his assistance in her studies, in company with Alitha Dennis.

On returning from the first of these interviews at the house of Deacon Dennis, she said to her mother: "I am so glad I went! Mr. Wellmont received me very kindly, so that I quite forgot my humiliations, till Mrs. Dennis, who sat listening, inquired of me how I liked working in the factory; and her thin lip curled so haughtily I came near weeping upon the spot. But I forced back my tears, and replied as intelligibly as I could."

"Be very patient, Edith," said her mother. "Out of all this affliction our heavenly Father will bring us in his own good time, and it shall work out for us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Heaven will be dearer to me, and earth the truer to you."

"Mr. Wellmont is the most agreeable man I ever knew!" said Edith, after a lapse of thought. Mrs. Hale lifted her eyes from her work upon the face of her child, as if she would read there the sentiments and emotions of her soul. Edith was unusually flushed with excitement, and the mother could scarcely fail to see how beautiful the radiance of her heart had made her. Her cheeks were like the freshest blush roses,

and her dark, thoughtful eyes beamed with a light, as though joy, like a swift-winged angel, had returned through the gate of tears.

"How is he the most agreeable?" inquired her mother.

"He is so unlike our old minister, who made one feel so very insignificant in his presence, that after a while I began to breathe naturally; and I gathered sufficient courage to ask several questions, all of which he answered by such clear and beautiful illustrations: old truths seemed new, and the plainest facts were garnished with rare attractions. He has a way, too, of introducing classical allusions with the happiest point. But, more than all this, his smile, and the look of his clear, full eye, so kindly, almost loving!" But, perceiving her mother's peculiar expression, she stopped abruptly, and blushed deeply. "If such persons only knew the great, the infinite happiness they contribute," she continued, after a moment's composure, "by condescending to those of low estate, they would feel that in so doing there was exceeding great reward."

"That is true, my dear," replied Mrs. Hale; "but you must not presume upon the kindness of Mr. Wellmont. True good breeding manifests itself more in freedom from presumption than in any other way, perhaps."

Edith sighed heavily; the bright light went down from her eyes; and, as the hours wore wearily on, the color faded from her cheeks, and her thoughts were of the curse and bitterness of poverty, that rose ever beside her hopes, like a destructive wind to sweep them away into the depths of darkness.

"My child," said Mrs. Hale, as she folded her work for the night, "it is very late; but we must not forget our devotions." Edith opened the Bible, and, in her clear, sweet voice, read from those blessed truths of the Gospel which ever soothe, strengthen, and encourage. And, when she came to the words "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?—shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine," &c., her voice softened into a channel of grief, and the late hardness of her heart, born of repinings and unreconciliation, was subdued to love, that blessed love of which she read, in conclusion, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## CHAPTER IV.

### MINISTER-MAKING AND OTHER MATTERS.

MR. WELLMONT rapidly won friends, so that at the expiration of his time of preaching as a candidate in Waterbury, the church were unanimous in desiring him to settle among them as their pastor. The call was promptly made and accepted. But the young minister was not elated with his success; he was an ambitious man, and had sketched great things for himself prospectively. His ultimate promised land was some flourishing city church; but he concluded it would be well for him to accept a situation so superior, for the country, as that presented in Waterbury; at least, it would do till a better could be obtained,—it would do to practise and experiment upon, till he had won larger experience and reputation.

The ceremonies of his ordination to the work of the ministry took place very much like all other ordinations. A large concourse of people were present, including a number of clergymen, with their wives; and liberal entertainment was provided by the leading members of the parish. One or two things were especially noticeable on this occasion. A

divine somewhat celebrated, from the city, preached the sermon, in which he drew very largely from his own experience, much more than from that of the apostles, and the rather preached himself, than Christ and him crucified. He failed to make the very impression he seemed desirous of giving. His individualities, upon recital, fell far below what his hearers had previously imagined; as it invariably happens, a man studiously setting off himself, from the very nature of the case only makes a ridiculous failure. A man of second-rate abilities, though, by dint of various effort, he had acquired a sidewise reputation among the first, he was secretly fearful he should not be always and everywhere appreciated. The speaker's voice was loud and dissonant, and his discourse was very lengthy, which made it doubly tedious. The same spirit seemed to animate him as does that species of falcon found in Africa, which, travellers tell us, is so impressed with the idea of its own powers, that it will sit for half a day perched upon the summit of a tall tree, uttering incessant cries, which the darkness of night is sometimes insufficient to terminate.

"It is a mystery to me," said Mrs. Humphrey to her husband, afterwards, "how Dr. Naylor has acquired such a reputation. I am sure I should judge him as inferior to one third of our country pastors, had I not known who he was."

"Humbug!" said Dr. Humphrey; "have you yet to learn that the largest proportion of great reputation is made out of humbug? A man gets a name by behaving the lion in public, the jackal in private; he swells immoderately, tickles the self-love of people, flatters their prejudices, and blows

his own horn on all possible occasions, and, above all, looks out to get under full sail in the most popular current of the times, — as migrating squirrels, when they wish to cross a stream of water, jump on a piece of bark and raise their tails to catch the wind, — and the people generally are such fools, such unmitigated asses, they really believe they are following a demigod! I tell you the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. In most cases in this world real greatness is never recognized save by a few private individuals — oftenest not at all; like that poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city, yet no man remembered that same poor man.”

“But you don’t mean to say that the reputations of the clergy are obtained in this way?” pursued his wife, somewhat alarmed.

“Of course not; I suppose I must refer chiefly to those called world’s people; but I do mean that in the upward race for fortune, in whatever profession, those men the most unscrupulous, full of bombast, respect for themselves and disrespect for others, oftenest get ahead of the true plodder, who pauses to make his footing sure and honorable for the perilous ascent; and these bags of wind look back upon them from their serene pinnacles, and shout, ‘The deuce take the hindmost!’ or, more classically, as when we doctors want to gild a bad-sounding prescription, ‘*occupet extremum scabies.*’”

“Wicked man!” exclaimed Mrs. Humphrey, “to talk thus in connection, even the most remote, with a minister!”

“A minister!” repeated the doctor; “why not as soon in connection with a doctor of divinity as a doctor of medicine?”

One cures or kills the souls, the other the bodies, of men; where's such a dignified difference? The soul is in a poor condition here, for religion or anything else, without a well body. St. Real says, 'He who speaks of a doctor (no matter whether of theology or pathology) does not always speak of a learned man, but only of a man who *ought* to be learned.'"

The charge to the people was by a minister of one of the adjacent towns, who was a man not yet in middle life, and was very well followed after for the smoothness of his voice and attractiveness of his manner, in connection with such trifles as some men would never have noticed at all. Moreover, he was generally a favorite of the ladies wherever he went; for he was a kind of pocket edition of a man, elegantly bound and gilt, with a euphonious name outside, in very large letters. His charge was decidedly positive, nothing about it admitting of doubt; for he was one of those ministers who preach more of what divines call the *agenda* than the *credenda*—always upon what we are bound to do, rather than what to believe. His mind was of that largely-peopled class, which never soars itself, or carries that of others, above words; consequently he inspired no exaltation or enthusiasm, none of the higher order of emotions, but simply instructed by exposition and admonition. And so, upon an occasion like this, an inferior part of the exercise was assigned him. This young man, of limited miscellaneous reading and experience, of very narrow views of human nature and the great principles of its right direction, stood there before elderly men of sound sense, and of the wisdom

of the Scriptures and practical life, and told them what to do, in the manner of a teacher directing a class in a primary-school; — told them how to live with their minister from day to day and year to year; how to accost him, to preserve his feelings uninjured; to provide for him, and keep him from moth and rust, as a housewife would keep her woollens and silver. Especially did he dwell upon the reverence due their minister.

“The times are getting more and more degenerate,” said he, flourishing his small, white hands; “and we look to the church to set the great example of respect for those who are the prophets of God, and expound his oracles. ‘He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward.’ And ‘Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.’ I charge you, my brethren, not to set your faces against him at every fault you imagine you see in him; for this frequent changing of ministers is a reproach to the religion of Christ. You should not expect him to do or say everything agreeable to each of your several standards; but rather according to his own standard, which is the truth.”

“Yes, that’s true enough,” added Father Shaw, mentally, recalling a verse out of an almanac of the eighteenth century:

“Who seeks to please all men each way,  
And not himself offend,  
He may begin his task to-day,  
But God knows where he’ll end.”

“But we’d rather be told on’t as if we’d some rights ourselves, and wan’t like a tribe of ants in a heap, with a foot set top on us.”



Much more in this wise did this minister deliver, and concluded by getting into a furious passion with people in general, which he vented by pounding the pulpit-cushion, and working himself into a ludicrous excitement, that passed among his female friends for "perfectly splendid oratory."

Not long after this, in progress of the exercises, arose an elderly divine, who represented a leading parish of the city, and offered a prayer, in that calm, fervent spirit, which contrasted effectively with the preceding exercises. It relieved the soul; as the eye rests upon the velvet green sward, dotted with waving trees, in a gentle summer rain, where late all was parched, and harsh, and painful to the sense. It was like the palpable stillness of a deep wood, broken only by the solemn flow of the stream which cleaves its heart, on which can be seen reflections of the humblest wild-flower of its banks, as well as the grand, majestic clouds of the heavens above. Each heart went out with the speaker toward the throne of God, and returned not till laden with adoration, humility, and love. They felt that he who led them now had acquainted himself with the great Mediator, and went not before him as a stranger, with the language of the world. But his words were few, so that the audience unconsciously listened afterwards, as if to catch one more strain of the harmony of a soul at peace with God.

The exercises of the day were generally of great interest to the members of the parish, but some were much more interested than others, according to their different temperaments. Julia Pickering declared it was the most auspicious

day of her life; she sat with the choir, and led one part, with unbonneted head, dressed in ringlets which fell to her waist. The "book-worm" pronounced it dull—it was such a bore to hear all these tedious things the ministers said; for her part, she would rather remain at home and read the last novel. Claudine subsequently sketched the scene of the ordaining prayer, and exhibited it extensively to her friends. Mr. Solomon Acre said the ministers, with their hands extended on Mr. Wellmont's head, as they were represented, looked like so many people clawing into a grab-bag. Mrs. Witherell was inexpressibly shocked on being informed of this by Zephaniah Wilkins; and, the very earliest opportunity, sent Mr. Solomon a tract. The sketch was also shown Mr. Wellmont, who said it reminded him of the ancient practice of stichomancy, which he had seen represented by several persons standing around a vessel, from which, after being shaken, they drew out small slips of paper inscribed from the sibylline books.

"But our minister's head is full of verses from the Book of books," observed Miss Pickering, much pleased at the correspondence of her idea.

Deacon Dennis exerted himself so much on that occasion he was quite overcome. It was one of the glorious events of his life, for he loved the society of the clergy to that degree, no privilege could be dearer to him than that of being permitted to follow in their train; like Dr. Clarke, the traveller, who said that, for the sake of Tweddell's society, he would have consented to black his shoes. He swallowed all their words of burning eloquence, as it is asserted by nat-

uralists frogs will swallow fire. The presence of so many ministers as a unity of reverence, what with obsequious attention, supervision, shaking hands at church, and entertaining at home, rendered him on the following day unable to leave his room, and he was threatened with a brain fever. His ailing maturing rapidly into sickness, Mr. Wellmont proposed to Mrs. Dennis and Alitha to obtain some other boarding-place, that their unusual cares might in some degree be lightened. With considerable reluctance they at last consented; but the thought of losing so much distinction as the boarding of the minister conferred was a great self-denial.

Mr. Wellmont regretted the illness of Deacon Dennis, but he was secretly glad of the prospect of a new home. He had lost weight by many pounds since coming to Waterbury, and the cause was not wholly attributable to his increasing labors and responsibilities. A letter written by the young minister to his mother about this time may serve to interpret his feelings more perfectly than his outward seeming to the world in which he moved, as it was dictated by the familiar confidence of the son, instead of the dignified restraint of the profession.

“DEAR MOTHER: From what I have written you, of late, you will not regret to learn that I have changed my boarding-place. My present residence is with the family of Mr. Phaniel, whose wife only is a member of my church. But Mr. Phaniel, though without any pretensions to religion, is one of my most generous friends. It would seem at present that my condition is improved in all respects. The family arrange-

ments are liberal as one could desire, and everything is done for my comfort which can be suggested, so that I am no longer an Erisichthon overshadowed by the wings of the demon of hunger.

“As this will probably be my home for some time to come, and I know you are always interested in the minutest affairs pertaining to me, I shall give you a few hasty sketches of my surroundings. Mr. Phanuel is one of the most remarkable men I ever saw, — which is an assertion of considerable breadth to apply to a citizen of a place like this. Having a very extensive business, he is said to be amassing property rapidly; consequently he lives in the best house in Waterbury, drives the best horses, and subscribes most liberally to all public and religious interests. But this all is no wise remarkable. It is his genius for progress to which I allude, and which, notwithstanding its proud results, renders him dissatisfied with everything. Nothing ever quite attains to his standard; he hourly blames his wife, house, employés, even the most manifest operations of Providence, if they interfere with his designs. He is always apparently in a deep study, and one which bodes no peace. Mrs. Phanuel is a quiet, sensitive, excellent-hearted woman, whose advantages for education I should infer have been limited. Indeed, I have been informed by Mr. Zephaniah Wilkins, who gives me, gratuitously and unasked, all the private histories of people here, that she was born and bred in humble circumstances, but

that even in this condition her friends opposed her marriage with Mr. Phanuel, as one who was then much inferior to her, being the equivocal son of a degraded father in the lowest walks of life. But he has gained rapidly from that time, and I can see he possesses the elements of a character of great power. His wife has not kept pace with his advancement, having been too closely occupied in striving to please her husband, whom she fears like a tyrant, in taking care of her children, and guiding the affairs of her household. I never compassionated woman more than this amiable, timid wife of a man who is gaining the higher rounds of life with the strides of a giant, and leaving her far behind, without sympathy, love, or consolation. To no one does she evince such inferiority as to her husband; the very sight of his handsome, athletic figure, his keen, deep-set eyes, the compression of his wide, thin lips, oppresses her to absolute nothingness. But she loves him to adoration; none can doubt it who ever heard her speak his name, or saw the tear tremble in her eye when he turns away from her with ill-concealed scorn at her failure to exactly meet his requirements in some domestic arrangements.

"Yesterday they received company, as is frequently the case, for Mr. Phanuel has the ungrudging hospitality of a Southron. A gay, dashing, intellectual lady was among the visitors, who banished every other woman in her presence into shadow. She could say anything in the most *au fait* manner, and entertain the gentlemen with conversation upon politics, the last fashionable book, metaphysics, or music,—

one of that class of women who remind us of Lady Blessington and George Sand. She was dressed with great elegance, I suppose (for, though I never notice the details of a lady's attire, I have an impression of the *tout ensemble*), and was altogether suggestive of the green lizard, which, whenever it sees a man, seems to take pleasure in displaying the brilliance of its eyes and its gorgeously-colored scales.

"This lady attracted Mr. Phaniel exceedingly, as all could see, and more especially his wife. He never unbends from his frigid dignity enough to actually flirt, or flatter the ladies; but for once he forgot his scheming, and became moved, absorbed, almost entranced, with the charms of this siren. His eyes followed her superb figure everywhere; and I thought he had at length found one object for which he could summon no criticism for improvement. Mrs. Phaniel looked on, as the shipwrecked mariner, who sees the haven of all his earthly hopes rapidly receding from his view; she looked as Iphigenia with the high-headed Electra in pursuit of her with a fire-brand, trembling, scared, unknowing whither to turn for succor. If I had not been a clergyman, I should certainly have donned the character of Orestes, and appeared in her aid. Such women as this fascinating stranger fail to attract me, for I am used to them well. I met hundreds during my college days, and, after falling in love once or twice, and finding myself a fool to be laughed at by them, I steeled myself with the armor of polite indifference; and she knew I was not her dupe as well as I did, for all such women are fully conscious where they rivet their chains. She doubtless voted me a

stupid theologian, who had only a talent for dogmas and clerical reserve.

“ It is said, the mother of Achilles dipped him when an infant in the waters of the Styx, which made him invulnerable everywhere except in the heel, by which she held him ; and, thanks to your watchful care, dear mother, I think I was rendered invulnerable in my boyhood, except in my *heart*, by which you held me. For I have found one of your sex in this quiet country place who already interests me unusually. She is the only daughter of a widow reduced from former independence to humble circumstances. I sometimes assist her in her studies, and she listens to me with such delicate attention, and expresses her ideas with so much conciseness, yet with unusual intelligence, that — well, I have no words that can express the manner of Edith Hale. At least, I know she is the incarnation of purity and beauty. *But I am not in love.* No ! have no fears for me in this connection. I will say, however, had I a fortune, and were the master of my actions, independent of what the world would say of me, I never saw one whom I should prefer for a life-companion before this young girl. Her mother, a dignified and highly-cultivated woman, reminds me of yourself ; so calm, and serene, and thoughtful for one’s interests.

“ You ask me : ‘ My son, have you forgotten your parish ? ’ I should have written of this before. The people seem very kind and considerate, and I think they are proud of me. It is somewhat of a task, as many a minister has found it before, to go around among all of them indiscriminately, and smile,

and inquire, and make myself their property. I do it, however, with as good grace as possible; for I feel desirous to accomplish a great amount of good, and already feel no little interest in the spiritual welfare of many of my people. I know I should be happier were I at the head of a flourishing parish in the city, and feel within a capability for much higher things than I am called upon at present to perform. But I do not have to make half the effort I should feel obliged to in a position of greater responsibility. The committee have agreed upon my salary at seven hundred dollars, and Mr. Phannel tells me he shall not take any pay for my board; but adds, 'Don't tell the parish, for they won't think it necessary to give you so much, if they hear of it.' How can I find fault with a man who is so liberal to me as this?

"You would like a description of my *sanctum sanctorum*! Well, here is my study: A spacious chamber, with windows looking upon one side over a beautiful lawn in front of the house, skirted with grand old trees, which afford a delightful shadow between me and the white houses opposite. And when they sigh heavily in the night-winds, I am reminded, between my dreams, waking and sleeping, of those old soycamores in our own yard at home, whose deep volume of sound I used to liken, you remember, to the funereal chant of the billows for the dead who were slumbering down in the hollow caverns of the ocean. My windows at the south open on a large garden, which, a little later, will flourish under the care of the gardener. The house is so elevated that I can see in the distance a very fine landscape of water, lowland, and wood,



while across one interval the buildings of an adjoining town are visible. Within my room are pictures, lounges, easy-chairs — everything to make me comfortable. My books, the portrait of yourself, and my writing apparatus, alone remind me of my old identity. Adjoining my study is my sleeping apartment, and the spot which I have consecrated the altar of my devotions. That is the only place which is truly my home; there I meet Him whom my soul loveth, who blesses, reproves, strengthens, and forgives."

As the young minister more fully realized his responsibilities, and became, consequently, deeply interested in his people, every unpleasantness connected with his situation was merged into the magnitude of his glorious work. His sermons were inspired with searching power, and his prayers were offered with new fervor.

Every preacher has some key-note to his religious faith and teachings; and the theme of Mr. Wellmont was oftenest the love of God, which he presented in all the beauty and distinctness of his own love, and with that effective application which convicted the conscience and touched the heart. Those long hardened by worldly cares, and those devoted to the gayety and pleasure of youthful life, were alike attracted to listen, and, before they had noted whither their interest was tending, their hearts were softened into contrition and tears. He preached nothing to excite mere sensual terror and dread, but won his hearers to look upward, believe, and live.

Meetings were held in the evening, to which the young and

the old, the man of leisure and the weary laborer, came and gathered manna from heaven; and the song of praise and rejoicing went up on the still summer air, reminding of that strain of the poetical prophet: "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord." Above all the voices could be heard that of Father Shaw, who not always sung correctly, but sung from a full heart, and the good old tunes suffered little diminution of pathos or power.

## CHAPTER V.

### EDITH'S FRIEND.

It was a Saturday evening in early June when Edith returned from her labor before the usual time, as was the custom on the last night of the week, and with a heart full of hope in anticipation of the coming hours of blessed rest. There had been a shower that afternoon, and the earth lay bathed in luxuriant beauty, which made it peculiarly grateful to those who had been bound to the monotony of toil during the long days of the week. The ground was flecked with the white leaves of the blooms of the trees, brought down by the wind like a light sprinkle of snow-flakes; the air was full of the melody of the evening birds, and all nature seemed to rejoice in the renewal of freshness and strength.

Maria Weston walked beside her, with that listless, dreamy air, which, of late, had taken the place of her old light-heartedness; and when Edith reached her home she paused a moment and said, "See! the stars are just coming out. How grand is the idea that God has created so many systems, and preserves all their revolutions in perfect harmony!"

"Yes!" replied Maria, yet without looking upward; "and

I think their Creator is too lofty, and has too many worlds to oversee, to mind such a poor creature as — I am."

"Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice ; and are you not of more value than many sparrows ?" said Edith.

"I know it," pursued Maria ; "but, since I have begun to think, I can't ever make it seem that God cares anything about me. Nor can I tell what there is in my soul that seems like a light struggling up through the gloom for something brighter and more glorious than I can be ; for my life sweeps it away as a daisy wind blows out a lamp, and leaves me in greater darkness than before."

"Nothing will keep that light burning so steadily as prayer," replied Edith.

There was a greater yearning for a brighter life in the heart of Maria than Edith imagined. A light, indeed, sometimes shone in her soul till every dark corner was illumined with the brilliance of hope ; as we read that the fungus rhizomorpha vegetates in dark mines, and, lighting up the roofs and walls, overcasts those places with the appearance of an enchanted castle. Whether this light should be found trimmed and burning at the last, or smothered hopelessly out, was a problem time only could solve.

As Maria walked on to her own home, Edith stood a moment looking after her, with that peculiar impression of calamity which one sometimes feels, without apparent reason, in connection with an object of solicitude. It was as if the angels had parted the curtains of the mysterious future for

an instant, through which she had caught a glimpse of successive vistas of gloom, with pendent stalactites of frozen tears.

"Your friend, Mary Pickering, has been here this afternoon," said Mrs. Hale, on the appearance of Edith, "and wished you to come to her to-night. I have to call upon a sick friend, and some business to transact in the village, and shall not return till late in the evening; so I engaged that you should go."

"I shall be very glad to see her, more especially that she has been away so long," said Edith.

"She has returned much improved, so that I hardly recognized her," said Mrs. Hale; "but you will soon see her for yourself," she added, in reply to Edith's look of interrogation.

A few minutes later, Edith stood at the door of Mr. Pickering, awaiting an answer to her summons. Many times had she stood thus, but not before since the great changes in her fortune; and, as she heard the sound of the piano within, and saw the light stream brilliantly between the crevices of the heavy damasks and laces of the parlor-windows, the contrast of her own life associations fell heavily upon her heart. The door was opened by the housekeeper, — a correct barometer of the feelings of those whom she represented; who met her, not with the friendly recognition of old, but stood irresolutely, and waited as for the delivery of an errand.

"Are not the ladies at home?" inquired Edith, surprised at the singular manner.

"Yes; but they are very much engaged this evening."

"But Mary will see me; will you show me to her?"

"Wait, and I will inquire," replied the housekeeper, turning away. But, presently returning, she said that the girls were all engaged, and wished to be excused. A heavy blow could not have struck Edith's sensitive heart more forcibly. She suddenly divined the whole truth; and, as she heard the door shut sharply behind her, she raised her hands to her face to repress the gushing tears. The time had been when Mrs. Pickering and her daughters had regarded the society of her parents and herself as an honor which no pains were spared to retain.

"Edith! is that you, darling?" now spoke a voice half-hushed from one of the attic windows. Edith turned, while her hand was upon the gate, and in the moonlight perceived the face of her friend Mary, far out of the window, and with her long hair sweeping down to her waist,—not bright and curling, but straight and dark, and suggestive of Night, "the genesis," as the Orphean fragments say, "of sorrow and gloom."

"Do come in at once," said Mary; "I never was more glad to see you."

"I must not," replied Edith.

"I thought you had come on purpose to stay a while with me; and I was feeling so lonely, too!" said Mary, reproachfully.

"I did come to see you ; but Gillis told me you were all engaged, and I would rather not go back now."

"Well, this is very strange," replied Mary ; "but just wait a minute, and I'll join you, presently."

Edith and Mary were friends of a long standing, and had always been on such excellent terms as to share each other's joys and sorrows with more than the love and sympathy of many sisters. Mary had been absent on a long visit at her grandfather's, and their intercourse had, therefore, been interrupted ; only brief notes, expressing their mutual friendship, had of late passed between them. In the mean time, Mrs. Pickering and her daughters had passed Edith everywhere, without manifesting any consciousness of her presence. She had thought their changed manner was attributable to mistake or accident ; for she did not fully realize that a large number of people are so weak-minded as to estimate others and grade their notice of them by factitious circumstances.

The two friends met with kisses and ardent protestations of affection.

"It is so pleasant to see you once more," said Mary, drawing Edith's hand within her arm ; "and I have so much to tell you of what has happened in my visit, for the best things I saved from my letters to tell you."

"I am glad you are happy, dear Mary," said Edith, repressing a sigh.

"I have almost always been so sad ; and I am now, when I think of you. But I know, Edith dear, something must come up soon in your favor."

Edith shook her head sorrowfully.

"I think so," continued Mary, "because I am so much happier myself than what I was. You know how much I have suffered, all my life; how the girls have always despised me, and said I ought never to show myself to anybody, I was so foolish and plain-looking; and how I have been so miserable sometimes, had it not been for you, I should have preferred to walk down into the river, and bury myself from misery!"

"O, not that!" exclaimed Edith. "It is very painful to hear you talk thus, dear Mary; tell me something of your visit."

"Well, I went up to grandfather's because ma was expecting company from the city, and, as she was very anxious to have everything appear in the best manner, she thought I had better be away; and, having scarcely left home before, I was, as you know, not sorry to leave. The visitors were to be a Mr. Raymond, an aged man, of great importance in the commercial circles of Boston, and his son. Mr. Raymond had transacted business with grandfather and father for many years, and owns estates of which they are in charge; but he had never been to Waterbury before. In prospect of his death, he wished to induct his son more thoroughly into his affairs, so that he might hereafter assume his business position. The girls were very much elated at the prospect of such a guest as the young man; for he is known to be heir prospective to immense wealth, and is much esteemed in the most select societies of the city. But, as it happened, the old gentleman thought best to send his son to grandfather's, in-



stead of taking him to Waterbury ; for he found his health inadequate to going that distance himself. So the elder Mr. Raymond only came here, very much to the disappointment of our family ; and, after remaining a day or two, returned."

"Yes," said Edith, "it was the same gentleman, I think, who called upon us with your father. He made very particular inquiries about us, and asked to see father's picture ; accounting for his interest by the fact of having known his parents many years ago. We thought it rather singular he should notice us so much, for he waited till I returned from the factory to see if I resembled my father, he said. And, when he went away, he looked quite saddened."

"His friends are almost all dead," said Mary ; "and his son told me his father was often low-spirited, and was a singular man about dwelling upon the past. He said he was sometimes so hypochondriacal he would not get any sleep for many successive nights."

"Then you made the acquaintance of his son," said Edith.

"O, yes, indeed ; and that is the cream of what I shall tell you by and by. I went up to grandfather's, expecting to be miserable all the while ; for I did n't suppose they would like to have me there more than they do at home. But they were so glad to see me, and talked to me so lovingly, I cried out the very first thing. Then they were distressed to see me feel so badly for no apparent reason, and charged me with homesickness. I assured them of my content, and presently got cheerful again ; it seemed so good to have them care for me,

and call me their darling Mary! They live in a grand old house, with such a parcel of queer furniture and antique curiosities, I had no lack of entertainment.

"During my visit I was invited to go out often," continued Mary; "and, at first, I refused; for, to confess the truth, dear Edith, I was provided with such a scanty and poor wardrobe, I was ashamed to appear before strangers. As you know, I am never allowed to dress nearly as well as my sisters; I either wear their cast-off clothes, or the cheapest new ones; and ma said I did not require anything more to go away with, they were such a quiet, plain sort of people thereabouts. I soon found it was very different. Then, too, there was Mr. Horace Raymond, who came there on the day after I did, and quite unaccountably prolonged his visit much later than he at first gave out, and in fact until he was summoned home by his father. When I had refused several times to accept his invitations, grandma took me to task to know the reason. I did n't like to tell, for fear she would blame my mother; but when I was compelled to excuse myself on account of my lack of dress, grandma nodded her head several times in her peculiar way that she has when she gets resolute; and that very afternoon she took me with her to a large town adjoining, and selected with me a pretty spring silk and a cashmere, which, by her skilful planning, were soon after ready for wear."

"And so after that you went with Mr. Raymond whenever he asked?" said Edith, smiling.

"Not quite that; but when I did go I was not so much mortified that I could not speak or act myself at all. I had

scarcely bestowed a thought upon my dress before ; yet, when I found myself received by people with kindness and attention, I wished to look as pleasing to them as I could. And, Edith, I never once felt like going by myself to cry for ill-words, or like taking down my hair for the dreadful headache ! ”

“ I thought I saw your hair down to-night,” said Edith ; “ not sad again so soon, dear Mary ? ”

“ Not very. But, when I am at home alone, and I hear the music below stairs, and the girls singing or chatting with their company, it is such an old habit of mine to unbind my hair that I may think and cry easier, it is difficult to put it off at once. But I don't think I shall ever feel so miserable again.”

They had walked on through the village, scarcely conscious of their way, when they found themselves opposite a short lane, which led down to a small house with which both were quite familiar.

“ Here we are almost at Mr. Linn's ! ” exclaimed Mary. “ Let us go in for a few minutes, as it is not late. I shall be especially glad to see them after my long absence.”

“ You must not forget to tell me more of Mr. Raymond at another time,” replied Edith.

“ Well,” said Mary, laughing, though a little confused, “ but I am anxious to see our new minister, from what you wrote me of him. Do you continue to like him ? ”

“ Very much,” said Edith ; “ he seems unusually kind, and

has already called upon us several times." But her voice was not now so steady as usual.

"How peaceful looks the old house, to-night!" said Mary. "I always think especial good angels guard the home of Mr. Linn."

Mr. Linn was an aged minister, who, after preaching for more than two-score years, was stricken with a paralytic affection, and from that time had been unable to move without assistance. He had no children, and, owing to working in various places under the unjust system of meagre salaries for untiring labors of love, had not been able to accumulate any property. But his wife had a small annuity now in her own right, which, with the gift of the use of a cottage by Mr. Parker, a prominent business man of Waterbury, and occasional assistance from other benevolent persons, afforded them a comfortable provision.

Having knocked for admission, the door was opened, after considerable delay, by old Mrs. Linn, who only ventured to look between the opening, as in the imperfect light she had no idea of the identity of her visitors.

"Don't you know us, grandma?" asked Edith. The old lady now threw wide the door, and, extending both hands, exclaimed,

"If this isn't Edith! and Mary, too, I believe!"

"Yes," whispered Mary, "it's me."

"I am so glad to see you," continued Mrs. Linn, preceding them within her sitting-room. "Father, here are two young friends called to see us once more," she said, laying her hand

upon the old gentleman's shoulder, who sat with his back toward the door, reading from a large book, by the light-stand beside him. But, elevating his spectacles, he looked up, and, seeing the two girls before him, smiled, and said, most heartily, "God bless you, my dear children! I thought you had forgotten me."

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Mary; "that would be the last thing we could do, Mr. Linn; I have been away from home for some time."

"And I have been away from myself," said Edith, sadly.

"Dear child!" exclaimed Mr. Linn, "we have often had you in our hearts, of late."

"And it is so pleasant to see you both once more! I don't know what we should do, if it were not for seeing the faces of our friends once in a while," said Mrs. Linn, now emerging from the bedroom, with a clean apron, which she was tying round her waist.

"And how do you find your health now, sir?" inquired Edith of the old gentleman.

"Not much changed; only my pain has rather increased of late, owing to the damp weather, I think."

"I am so sorry!" exclaimed Mary.

"No; it's all right. I have just been reading in that blessed book," laying his shrunken hand upon the Bible, "'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.' These afflictions are good for me, children. They make me feel humble before God, and bring me very often to him in supplication. If I had the use of my limbs, and were as well as others are, I

might get to living in my own strength; and so, by my rebellion, grieve my blessed Lord and Master."

"Not with your goodness, Mr. Linn," observed Edith.

"Little do you know how my proud heart once was!" exclaimed the old man. "As I sit here, day after day, and year after year, I often think how much I used to believe I could do. I would tell of laboring for the Lord; of doing this and that for the glory of Christ. But, as soon as he put forth his hand and touched me, I could neither work for myself nor others. Who may stand before the mighty power of God! Who may add one beam to the glory that filleth the universe!"

The girls looked upon the old man with admiring awe; for he spoke upon his favorite theme. His countenance was radiant with the inward light of his soul, and he seemed transfigured to an angel.

## CHAPTER VI.

MAJOR OLIVER.

MR. WELLMONT had acquired a habit of calling upon Father Shaw early, on almost every week, as the old man made no scruples of telling him unreservedly what he thought of his sermons on the preceding Sabbath. Every public man likes to know the impression which he makes upon the minds of men, and sensible people regard it a privilege to be told with candor what judicious observers think of their efforts. Isolated and unguarded indeed is that minister who has no wife to criticize his words and deeds, or numbers no family friend among his parishioners. The wives of some men think all their husbands say is beautiful; and a *critique* sound and sensible would be to them as a "lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." Other wives never hear anything so satisfactory from their husbands as from others, and delight in nothing so much as a continuous strain of accusation. Father Shaw was the only one on whom Mr. Wellmont depended for a knowledge of his labors; and faithful was he to this dependence, which was never confessed, but tacit and implied.

On a Monday morning, not long after his ordination, he dropped in upon Father Shaw, as usual, being on his way to visit a parishioner whom he had missed at church, and who, he was informed, was ill. The place of his destination was about three miles beyond the village, and he had started to walk, designing to make several calls by the way. But Father Shaw would not consent to his walking that distance.

"You shall wait till I tackle my Hagar inter the chaise; she's been standin' in the barn doin' nothin' for a long time. I've had so much to do I could n't use her, and she needs to stretch her legs," he said, taking his hat, and hastening to the barn.

During his absence Miss Leah presented herself, and, with her accustomed directness, said :

"I wish to inquire of you about the state of feeling in this place. I noticed some of the young people were not so attentive in meeting yesterday as they should be, and a few of their parents fail to set a proper example in this respect."

Mr. Wellmont replied complacently, for he had accustomed himself to her peculiarities; but he was not unwilling to leave, as he saw her father coming round with the horse and chaise. On going out, Miss Leah followed, with one or two other allusions to duty, mentioning several families on his way which had not been looked after for some time.

"There!" said Father Shaw, handing the reins to Mr. Wellmont, "she'll take you over as slick as a mill, ef you only keep the right side on her."



"But you had better have a care, for she's rather upish when she has n't been used for a while," said Miss Leah.

"No, you need n't," said her father; "Hagar's gentle as a cow, ef you manage her right. Some like my Leah, here; stiddy and tame ef you keep in with her, but rather onsartin' ef you raise her dander by cuttin' her the wrong way."

Miss Leah now walked directly into the house, closing the door sharply behind her, and Mr. Wellmont intimated to Hagar it was time to start. No sooner did she feel the movement of the reins, than she started off in high dudgeon, as if "bound to have a time," tossing her head to snuff the wind, and turning it to the right and left, with the apparent intent of eying out every foe in ambush by the way. She was a white, delicate-looking creature, with great symmetry of limb, a mouth as sensitive as a feather, an arched neck, with a mane flowing low and jauntily, and, altogether, nervous to that degree the least motion or sound disturbed her. Mr. Wellmont was not one of those men who love a horse, and so easily acquire the arts and graces of horsemanship. It was all he wished to do to hold the reins, and that often in the most careless manner. He was now, however, considerably aroused, perceiving that the creature he was driving required close attention and skilful management. He would have preferred to ride slowly, in order to inspect the country by the way; but his wishes were evidently of not the least consideration with the animal, for as soon as he slackened the reins she only went the faster, and when he held stoutly she bore upon the bit and trotted as fast as she could, just missing a gallop.

"To keep the right side of her, as directed," he mused, "is impossible, for I can't even find it at all, much less keep it. I have whipped her on the right side, the left, and behind, but it all makes no difference. I say, as Caddie said of his Mause, 'Stop her wha can!'"

Scarcely had he concluded this thought, when he found the chaise had suddenly struck against the underbrush by the wall, and Hagar was leering and curveting about, apparently uncertain whether to go on or to turn about.

"What now?" he exclaimed, looking about on the opposite side, and seeing nothing unusual. "Has the—— no, the angel got into this horse?" Perceiving that exclamations were of no avail in the case, he alighted, and, taking Hagar by the head, succeeded in leading her by. A new difficulty now arose—to regain his seat in the chaise, for she was bent upon making up for lost time. As often as he attempted to mount, he was forced back by the wheel; but, keeping the reins stoutly in his hand, he just escaped being left behind. At this juncture he perceived a young man advancing on foot, and, waiting for him to come up as well as he could, obtained his assistance, so that he was able to proceed. After a half-mile, which was made with great rapidity, the road led over the brow of a hill of some length, and in the ascent the creature slackened into a reasonable speed. But, Mr. Wellmont happening to sneeze pretty loudly, she took fright, and started off again down the hill faster than ever. Drawing the reins so that her head was twisted awry, with her tongue protruding over the bit, and bracing his boots against

the dashboard, with the expression of his countenance in keeping, the aspect of his situation was not only slightly ludicrous, but extremely critical.

Fortunately, at a short distance ahead, he saw a house at which he designed to stop; and, aiming Hagar directly into the yard, brought her up at last, trembling and panting, at a post. On seeing a horse driven thus furiously, some half a dozen heads were planted before the windows, and the children ran out in the greatest bewilderment; but, ascertaining the fast horseman was their minister, the wonder suddenly subsided into awe, and all quickly scampered out of sight.

Within this house Mr. Wellmont met some persons who interested him, so that he prolonged his call beyond his limit. He was just rising to go, when he saw a carriage pass the windows which greatly resembled that in which he rode. Going quickly out, he perceived that Hagar had gone; but, to do her justice, she was carrying the chaise along quite leisurely, with the reins hanging loosely on either side. He now started off to overtake her by surprise; and, as he came carefully up, he spoke very softly and confidently. But the creature evidently thought he was driving the jest too far; and at that instant, shaking her head knowingly, she set off again, leaving her driver far behind. Mr. Wellmont followed after, and what might be his precise reflections then and thus, is yet unrevealed. Ministers are but men, and may be presumed to have feelings, as well as others. Perhaps he prayed; if so, his prayer was heard; for he had not proceeded far before he saw, at some distance ahead, that all was

well; for some persons had run out from a shop by the way, and succeeded in mastering her.

"Quite providential, this escape," observed Mr. Wellmont, as he came up, to the man who held his horse.

"Yes, I reckon 't is," replied the stranger. "I had such a time myself, a while ago, only we got thrown out; and, what was the most wonderful, if my horse had run two rods further, we should have been thrown on to a sharp rock — I, and my wife, and baby; but, most providentially, we were thrown right down into the soft mud."

Mr. Wellmont succeeded in reaching Major Oliver's place, the limit of his ride, without further trouble of consequence; and, when he alighted at last, he felt very much as Mahomet may be supposed to have felt when he rode on his white horse, Alborak, to the third heaven in one night.

"I wish they had asses, instead of horses, in these parts, as they had in Scripture times; for Balaam could not have been half so much disturbed, when his ass spoke, as I have been to-day," said Mr. Wellmont to himself, as he was hitching Hagar stoutly to a post.

The place at which he stopped was the residence of a man of middle age and a bachelor; one of whom Byron says,

— "He pays no rent, and has best right  
To be the first of what we used to call  
'Gentlemen farmers.'"

The situation was retired, but located with singular beauty. Around, at a short distance, were brave green hills, clothed

with waving grasses, and skirted here and there with orchard-trees in full bloom; while on one side was a range of lofty wood, into which paths were broken to its inner recesses. Between this and the grounds before the house was a luxuriant valley, through which ran a winding stream, losing itself to the sight further down in a ravine amid the clumps of trees. Bordering this valley was a row of silver-leaf trees, interspersed with evergreens. At the southern side could be seen a fine prospect of the buildings of a neighboring town. Before the house were hedges of unchecked growth, overshadowed by tall lindens and sycamores. On every side were clusters of fruit-trees, with their blushing and snowy blossoms, giving the appearance of one vast garden of flowers.

The exterior of the house impressed Mr. Wellmont as a combination of oddity, carelessness, and an elegance at once massy and *barbaresque*. It was extensive, but, apparently having been built at different times, presented no idea of unity, but rather seemed a mass of irregularities. There were gables, coignes, balconies, porticoes, stoops, and nooks, of various descriptions. Portions of the building were of a soft roseate stone-color, other parts of a deep brown, while the window-sashes were black, with shutters of a deep green. Everything about the premises seemed to have been arranged with an eye to singular contrasts.

The door was opened to Mr. Wellmont by a smart Irish boy, who, with an indefinite number of flourishes, conducted the visitor to a receiving-room upon the north, which was

so darkened by the thick foliage of the trees and shrubs about the windows, that at first the objects within were scarcely definable. Though nearly the noon of the day, it seemed a deep, perpetual twilight. While the servant had gone to make report to his master, Mr. Wellmont amused himself by glancing about him, for he soon discovered the apartment was very singular in its arrangement. In the centre of the room was an octagonal table, with curious legs, of a fluted pattern, terminating in large brass claws, and all connected by pieces of wood intertwined with serpents' heads. Upon this table was a cigar-holder of *faience*, painted with designs of a Swiss dancing scene. There were also, lying carelessly, as if recently used, pipes of a curious Turkish pattern, with heavy cords, and tassels of crimson and gold color. On two sides of the room the walls were covered with book-cases, crowded with volumes, pamphlets, and newspapers, arranged, evidently, without regard to proportion or order, and looking here and there as if, at the merest touch, they would totter to the floor. Beneath a bay-window with heavy mullions was a rude cage, containing gray squirrels, looking as much out of keeping there, with the gay tapestry carpet and rose-colored silken curtains, as a tuft of coarsest wood-moss amid the choice exotics of a conservatory. Upon the wall over the chimney-piece was a picture of a battle-scene, and under this Mr. Wellmont saw upon the mantel a mysterious-looking box, partly of glass and partly of wood, from which he thought he heard a low, singular sound. Upon approaching it, and looking more attentively, he saw

nothing within the glass but its flooring of cotton, and something which resembled a frog's leg. Placing his hand unconsciously against the box, he was suddenly startled so that he sprang backward with a leap, on seeing the head of a snake thrust out within the glass from an aperture in the wood. The snake, a huge, black creature, advanced with great boldness and complacency. For a moment the minister and the snake eyed each other attentively, when the latter ran out his red forked tongue rapidly several times, and then withdrew himself from sight without further ceremony.

At this juncture the boy returned, offering to show Mr. Wellmont to the major, who was in his private room. Through various windings and turnings he followed, till he was ushered into a large, lofty room, into which the full noonday sun shone. The major sat before a smouldering fire, in his ordinary dress-clothes (though a morning-gown hung within view), with his back to the fire, and his head resting upon his folded arms upon the back of his chair. On seeing Mr. Wellmont, he arose, and, handing him his own chair, which proved a large fauteuil, took another, and now sat with his face to the fire, and with his limbs extended and resting on the shelf above.

"How is your health to-day, sir?" inquired Mr. Wellmont, more definitely, after the first salutations.

"O! I'm getting along! decidedly mending! No notion of putting on night-cap and gown and going to bed!" replied the major, negligently, glancing from his half-closed eyes.

"Have you a fever?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"A fever! by no means, sir! Do you think I should ever have a fever?" But, perceiving that Mr. Wellmont looked as though he had made a discovery that he was talking with a man a "little out," he added, emphatically, "There are no fevers only what the doctors make."

"In your opinion, sir!" said Mr. Wellmont, smiling.

"In my opinion! Yes; I *know* there are no fevers only what are brought on by taking medicines!"

"But do you take no medicines?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"Never! I would as soon take poison; I mean the stuff the doctors give. I have taken enough in the first part of my life for all the rest. I tell you, sir, the doctors are a cursed set — every one of them — only, perhaps, the surgeons!"

"You have no opinion of consulting physicians, then," observed Mr. Wellmont.

The major now stared at his visitor in earnest, rising from his chair and folding his arms behind him. "After all, you don't know me!" he said, as if musing to himself. "I'll tell you about it," he added, resuming his seat again.

"When I was about sixteen, I was ailing, and my mother, being a famous hand for doctors, sent for them far and near — young ones and old ones, hot ones and cold ones, and all sorts. And they dosed me, those infernal doctors did, with calomel, and arsenic, and lobelia, and the Lord only knows what not. They kept on and on, plastering, blistering, physicking, vomiting, and bleeding, till the strangest thing was, I had n't died. But I had a strong constitution, — the Olivers all have



strong constitutions, — so I merely lived, while, all the time, not one of their poisons came near hitting my complaint. One night, after there had been a council of doctors over my case, two were sitting in my room before the fire. It was cold and stormy without; but warm with oak-wood coals, and plenty of wines and brandy, within; so their tongues flowed without reserve. They thought I was too insensible to hear them, I suppose; but in this they were mistaken.

“The stories of their experience they told, sir! The accounts of the experiments they made upon their helpless victims! More shocking than all, the influence which they boasted they gradually acquired over silly women by their fiendish arts! My God! it made my blood leap in my veins to hear them. It made it leap so that I recovered, from that night, without any more of their attendance.”

“There are notoriously bad men in every profession,” now interposed Mr. Wellmont; “but that should not prevent us from forming a correct judgment of the majority.”

“What I have said, I have said!” retorted the major. “There are, doubtless, well-disposed doctors, like our Dr. Humphrey, but they are fools about curing people. They guess and experiment; if they hit the nail on the head, ’t is well; if not, ’t is all the same.”

“But what means do you employ in sickness?”

“I am seldom sick, although I was injured then beyond repair. When I am attacked, however, I abstain from eating a mouthful till I get better; take warm baths, perhaps; some harmless physic or astringent, as the case may require. But

it is better to try, if possible, and live so as to prevent sickness. I never eat anything but meat, vegetables, fish, and one or two kinds of wholesome fruit preserved; it's these fancy breadstuffs and pastries that ruin people's health, assisted by imprudent exposures."

"In that point, I agree with you," said Mr. Wellmont; "but you cannot fail to believe that remarkable cures have been effected by physicians?"

"Nonsense! asking your pardon, sir. These famous drugs, which are pretended to bring about such great cures, are about as potent as those which the French swallowed in the time of an eclipse of the sun, in the seventeenth century, which were vaunted by their inventors as remedies against the eclipse disease. Why don't doctors cure themselves and their families, if they can cure others? I have known some of them die of the very disease they pretended to cure. Garrick said a good thing, when speaking of Sir John Hill, a writer of the last century, an apothecary, and a great inventor of quack medicines, who at last died of the gout, although he professed to cure that disease. He said,

'For physic and farces, his rival there scarce is;  
His farces are physic, his physic a farce is.'

"We may better do as the barbarians," continued the major, "who wear scrolls containing verses from the Koran, as a charm against injury, or as the Romans suspended from the necks of their children their *bullæ*, to avert the effects of the evil eye, than to dose ourselves with these poisonous

medicines. Or more reasonably may we derive greater profit from careful observation of nature, as the Kamktschadales watch the bears when wounded, to see what leaves they gather with which to cure the wound, and what method they pursue for recovery when otherwise diseased."

"But the study of medicine is a science," observed Mr. Wellmont, "which holds an importance equal, and, perhaps, superior, to other sciences; it does not admit of comparison with the practices of superstition, or animal instinct."

"O, yes! I have read books upon books upon the science of medicine; upon hygiene, dietetics, pathology, nosology, semiotics, diagnostics, prognostics, therapeutics, pharmacy, clinics, and the whole jaw-breaking set of mummary! It all amounts to tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee; and the whole should be classed under one generic term of toxicology, which, as you know, treats entirely of poisoning. Solomon was the wisest man, and the best physician who ever wrote upon medicine. He said, after he had examined all the lying vanities of earth: 'Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and be merry.' Now, that was the most sensible prescription ever written for the benefit of man."

"It hardly reached the diseases of the body, however."

"Indeed, sir, it did! A merry heart and a contented mind, wholesome eating and water drinking, assist more in the making of a healthy body than anything else. And I've noticed there are few things which make one so unhealthy as hatred. Those persons who are always peaking about after

other's faults, and who try to take such care of the whole world, as a natural result neglect themselves, and are almost invariably dyspeptic and jaundiced."

Mr. Wellmont was compelled to laugh, despite himself, and the major continued, in another strain: "One reason, out of several, why I never married, was the fear I should get a woman who would have a doctor's horse forever hitched at my posts. Such women are plentiful, you know, sir; and they are perfect bugbears to me; these delicate, spleeny creatures, who love their dear family physician infinitely better than their husband, and would be mad enough to pull his hair if he attempted to say the doctor could by any possibility do wrong. I had no idea of leaving things so that when I came home and went to my room, I should find a smooth-tongued, keen-eyed fellow holding my wife's wrist in his fingers, and gazing into her eyes to see a reflection of himself, while he impressed that same image on her heart; and, then, seeing him poke about among my shelves, and knowing altogether more about my household affairs than I did myself. How so many men submit to these things, I can't divine. They have less spirit than I have, or they would pitch them out of their doors, heels uppermost."

"As is usual with radical people," said Mr. Wellmont, "you have merely represented one side of the picture, and that in some of its darkest lights. If you had ever seen a friend, apparently on the border of the dark valley, providentially restored to health by the skilful treatment of a physician, you could not find heart for such words of accusation

against a profession generally so valuable to the human family. In short, sir, I do not wonder that you are a bachelor."

The summons for dinner was now heard, and the conversation upon this topic was dropped.

The major conducted Mr. Wellmont into the dining-room, which was a small room, with windows at one side opening into a conservatory, filled with vines and plants, some of which were luxuriously in flower. The walls were covered with plain green hangings, bordered deeply with daffodils and moss-roses. Upon the floor was a fine rice-straw matting, covered at the centre with a cloth in imitation of the Japanese carpets, of a blackened blood-color, inwrought with silver flowers. The sideboard was adorned with calabash dishes, cut-glass, and plate, engraved handsomely and highly polished.

When dinner was concluded, the major inquired of Mr. Wellmont if he would not like to go out and see his farm, and what he had got upon it.

"Very much; but you are ill to-day, and —"

"I am well enough to go out of doors, for I never keep myself from the open air when I can help it." As they went to the hat-tree for their hats, the major said, as he tried Mr. Wellmont's hat (an invariable custom of his with his gentleman visitors, having a very large head himself), "I should like to go hatless always, if fashion would by any means protect me from ridicule."

"You may remember," said Mr. Wellmont, "that the Emperor Hadrian always walked without a hat, in all seasons of the year."

"I hope he was not bald," replied the major.

"I presume not, from the fact of his going with uncovered head; for baldness was very mortifying to a Roman."

"You see my evergreen hedges," remarked the major, on going down his yard; "they are scarcely trimmed at all. I like to see everything growing in its natural luxuriance." As they passed the hedge, several fowls walked leisurely away from under the branches and followed the major toward the granary, their numbers increasing at every step, till a whole troop, of almost every variety, had gathered closely about him, expecting plentiful rations at the earliest opportunity. The major stopped, and laughingly said to Mr. Wellmont, who was looking on with interest, "These are my companions; they all take me to be one of themselves."

Having scattered grain bountifully, he caught a fair-sized chicken and perched it upon his shoulder, suffering it to eat kernels from his mouth and hands.

The lambs, pigs, and calves, were exhibited in order, all of which the major evidently regarded with great pride and affection. They were made to display several feats in proof of their docility and intelligence.

"I have a kind of millennium on my place," said he; "my creatures all love each other, and, if I get a new one, I soon teach it to act in harmony with the rest. I never strike them, or suffer my help to do so; but I make them understand that I love them, and they thrive and fatten upon this treatment."

Mr. Wellmont was next shown the orchards, and made to

listen to voluminous explanations of the kinds of fruit-bearers, the manner and season of engrafting, and a variety of other kindred matters.

"Just yonder," said the major, pointing to an enclosure beyond his garden, "is the burial-place of my family. Around that monument sleep my father and his fathers before him, my mother, and all her children except myself."

"And have you no relatives living, then, to inherit your estate?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"One only — a nephew; but I have not decided about his being my heir."

"I trust he is not unworthy; but pardon the freedom of my remark," said Mr. Wellmont, who had conceived an unusual interest in the affairs of the eccentric major.

"No, he is not unworthy, I think," said the major; "but I shall wait to prove him well before I decide. It is a principle of mine to leave a young man to depend upon himself, and try him thoroughly with the world. My nephew was a poor boy, — apprenticed out, — never went to college; but he has got to be a famous lawyer and politician."

"You surely do not refer to the distinguished Hugh Oliver?" said Mr. Wellmont.

"The same," replied the major, with evident pride. "I have never helped him much, but I have watched him; and, if he comes out right at last, he will yet get paid for making an effort."

"He already honors you much, and I predict he will yet attain to some of the highest honors in the gift of his

country ; for he is not a demagogue, but a sound, able, conscientious advocate of what he deems right principles, — at least, I infer this from his public acts and his speeches," said Mr. Wellmont.

Much more did they converse in this manner, when, after concluding their inspection of the grounds, they returned to the house. On entering the library, the major said : " I have one book which I esteem more highly than any other except the Bible. I wish you to examine it."

Mr. Wellmont was puzzling himself whether a book with such a distinction would be the works of Seneca, Confucius, or "The Saint's Rest," when the major announced, with sober, earnest admiration, "The History of Waterbury." Suppressing a smile, he took the proffered book for examination, and began turning the leaves, where his eyes fell upon the generations of Joneses, Howes, Greens, etc., and a few remarks at the close containing local anecdotes, such as of the first inhabitant who was struck by lightning, and of a boy who ran away from the Indians and fell into a well.

"I love to read when all these people, whom I have so long known, were married and born ; and of the dead," said the major, as he was turning to his own family record. "You see my family are very ancient," he continued ; "my first ancestors came to England with William the Conqueror. I like the idea of ancient descent, and I think the Olivers are traced back very clearly."

"In this respect," observed Mr. Wellmont, "you resem-



ble the Poles, who carry back their pedigree to a grandson of Noah."

"My ancestors were a very celebrated people," pursued the major, "and I have many relics of their greatness." He now went to a cabinet, and, unlocking the doors, took out several mysterious-looking boxes, which he also unlocked.

"There is a tooth which my great-grandfather had drawn from his head, — a head that held more wisdom than a phalanx of ordinary men; he was a great man in the province under the king. Singular, is n't it?"

"It is, certainly," said Mr. Wellmont.

"The fact is, it's a monstrous tooth! Did you ever hear of one like it?"

"I have read," said Mr. Wellmont, "in the grave of the giant of Bashan was found a tooth that weighed four and a half pounds."

The major was a little nonplussed at this. "But that was in the days of the antediluvians," he said, after a moment's hesitation.

"And when the Portuguese plundered Ceylon," continued Mr. Wellmont, "in a temple of magnificent structure they found a singular tooth, enclosed in a casket of pure gold, for the redemption of which the natives offered seven hundred ducats."

"No money would tempt me to part with this," remarked the major, as he returned it carefully to its place.

"There are some spoons on which are the coat of arms of

the family. They belonged to my grandfather, who was a member of Congress, and a great patriot; and here," said the major, throwing open the doors of an inner glass case with a great flourish, "is a tea-set, for which my grandfather sent to China, and had them made after his own design, with the initials of himself and wife."

"A classical idea, indeed!" said Mr. Wellmont.

"It is an illustrious idea!" exclaimed the major. "I don't know about its being classical."

A pride of ancestry was evidently the major's weak point, and Mr. Wellmont knew well how to humor it.

"I should have been a great man, myself, perhaps," said the major, as he turned away from these ancestral relics, "only it was too much work when I was young. I had rather stay at home, master my creatures, tame foxes, weasels, and the like, and think philosophy, than go to college and strive among all sorts of men for a place in the world. All this feverish ambition to do something wonderful is sheer folly. The best way to live, as I have already said, is to take one's comfort by the easiest possible method which is honest.

"You remind me of the words of the inscription upon the statue of Sardanapulus," said Mr. Wellmont, who, by the by, seemed even more than usually possessed with his natural spirit of making learned allusions on this occasion. "The hands of the statue were crossed, as in the act of clapping. It is this: 'Sardanapalus, son of Anacyndaraxes, built Archialus and Tarsus in one day. But do you, O stranger, eat, drink,

and be merry, as all other human pursuits are not worth this !' alluding to the clapping of the hands."

"That is it !" returned the major, with animation. "So doing, my life has passed happier than any king's. I don't think a man lives who enjoys himself better than I do."

"I should not suppose you would enjoy such a household companion as that I saw upon the chimney-piece in your receiving-room," rejoined Mr. Wellmont.

"O, that snake ! Yes ; I like him vastly. I call him Sati, and I believe the devil knows his own name. You know I have an undoubted right to call him 'devil ;' for the first one of which we have account was a snake."

"Sati in the Sanscrit means pure," said Mr. Wellmont. "I hope you do not trust so much to his purity as to ever permit him to leave his cage ?"

"Indeed, I let him out often ; and he goes about the room, poking his head into every crevice and cranny, and, sometimes, into the tops of my boots."

"Ugh !" shuddered Mr. Wellmont. "You are almost as bad as the people of Wydah, who worship snakes and have them all about their apartments. To have such a hideous thing as that about me ! Ugh ! he ran out his tongue several times at me when I was in there."

"Snakes never like ministers ; he knew the difference between you and me," said the major, now thoroughly filled with laughter. Mr. Wellmont was confounded with the contagious merriment of the strange man before him.

"O dear !" said the major, subsiding a little ; "this is

sanitary. It exceeds being packed in wet blankets. I am well henceforth."

Many more curious things did the major display to his guest, and could have fully engrossed his interest had he remained till night; but, recollecting an engagement at an evening meeting, Mr. Wellmont took his departure at an early hour.

The capricious Hagar started decently on her way homeward, so that Mr. Wellmont was allowed a little time for reflection. "Just the place, that of the major's," he mused, "I would like for my own. It would be almost a paradise to me. As he has so few heirs, if I manage well, he may remember me in his will." Then he fell to pondering on what he should say that evening at the meeting; and he wondered if he should see a certain interesting face, in a mourning bonnet, among those who would attend. Just then, as he was passing the lane which led from Mr. Linn's, he saw a young lady coming up, whom he recognized as Edith Hale.

He slackened the horse, and invited her to ride home. She blushed, hesitated, and declined. But Mr. Wellmont would not receive her excuses; he alighted, — not without considerable difficulty, for the horse was very impatient at the interruption, — and assisted her to the seat, and, by unusual agility, was able to resume his own place. There was something very exhilarating in his situation, and Mr. Wellmont became conversational at once. As he gazed down and saw her sweet face roseate with blushes, her large, dark eyes so sad in their expression, yet animated with high resolve and

intelligence, and heard her musical voice, suggestive of a heart full of beautiful emotions, he thought, "I regret that she is in such poverty; for she is certainly the most charming young lady I ever met, and seems perfectly well-bred."

He inquired for her mother. "My mother's health is failing very rapidly, I fear," she replied, in tremulous tones; "her misfortunes affect her seriously, and I dare not think what may be the result."

Mr. Wellmont spoke words of consolation and sympathy; for he was reminded of the death of his own father, of his mother's struggles afterwards, and how he was enabled at last to rise above all these afflictions, as he now believed. He recounted incidents in his experience by which he had been encouraged and directed; and there is always exceeding interest attached to such allusions from one who has established a superiority of position. As they thus conversed together, their hearts were attracted by mutual sympathies; and that mysterious magnetic influence which arises between persons in the dawning of love was rapidly acquiring power and ascendancy over the ceremonies of a formal acquaintance. Edith might have won too many glances of thrilling admiration to recall afterwards in tranquillity, had they not suddenly arrived at her home, — all too soon, as both inwardly thought.

Hagar was wayward again at this bringing up at a strange door when hastening home, and with difficulty Mr. Wellmont was able to retain the least command. Edith, trembling with fear, placed her foot upon the step of the chaise, when the

restive animal began to rear and plunge, going backward and forward, till it seemed impossible to assist her to alight. At the moment she attempted to descend the horse sprang forward, so that Edith lost her balance, and, in spite of Mr. Wellmont's efforts, she was thrown upon the ground, and the wheel passed rapidly over her body. The horse, escaping from all control, ran off in the direction of Father Shaw's. In an agony of apprehension, Mr. Wellmont found Edith insensible, while a stream of blood was issuing from her mouth, and her face was livid as the hue of death. He took her quickly in his arms, and carried her to her mother.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A GLOOM WITH A SINGLE RAY OF LIGHT.

NATURE never sympathizes with human woe. Within a kingdom of her own she sits, in royal robes, and sings, and blooms, and expands in strength, regardless of that mightier realm of mind which surrounds and permeates her heart like light. As Edith lay with her hands crossed upon her bosom, the hue of life gone from her cheeks, and the strength crushed out of her frame, so lately elastic with youthful vigor, the birds of summer carolled merrily in the old trees about the cottage, the squirrels played in and out the wall at the foot of the garden, and the flowers opened anew their beauty to the day. But how still, how oppressively solemn, was the sick room, where life and death strove for mastery! Still, save the sobs of the broken-hearted mother, who through all the late fearful hours of insensibility had ministered, watched, agonized, and prayed over her child, with the outward seeming of composure; but when Edith, an hour before, had unclosed her eyes once more, recognized her, and whispered the single word "Mother," her heart yielded to its pent grief, and she had wept without restraint.

Edith had lapsed into a slumber after a terrible struggle with pain, and her mother knelt beside the bed, and, with uplifted hands, cried to God in her heart, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" She had borne the many trials of her life, one great grief after another, with the submissive faith and fortitude of one who grounds every hope upon the Rock of Ages; but this last blow which had fallen upon her darling child seemed too great to bear. It was a fearful dream, whose waking was yet a more fearful reality. Edith must wrestle with her pain alone; and she must stand by, behold, and yet could in no wise become a substitute. No human love, save a mother's equally strong as hers, could compass the depth of her agony.

She was aroused from her grief by the quiet entrance of Dr. Humphrey, who had scarcely left the sufferer from the first. As he examined his patient, his face brightened, and he whispered to Mrs. Hale, "Better, decidedly better; we may have a single hope now."

"Heaven be praised!" responded the mother, the tears raining anew down her sunken cheeks.

"I have summoned a celebrated surgeon, upon my own responsibility, to meet me here to-day," continued the doctor; "and I am in hopes he will agree with me that she has sustained no serious injury."

"O, doctor! — your kindness is overpowering! I can never repay you!" exclaimed Mrs. Hale, fervently.

"Not a word, madam, — not a word!" And he went out again, brushing the tears from his eyes.



Once more did the mother strive with her wasting grief alone; and many of her old sorrows, whose bitterness had sunk into her heart years ago, returned again with new freshness and power (for we are so constituted that a new trial takes to its embrace every former one), and she saw before her those whom she had long loved, but who were dead, or were to her as silent as though in reality dead. The poor widow had no relatives to soothe and sympathize with her. Between her and those of her kindred blood a great barrier stood, through which she could not pass, or even look. Yet how often against that gate of brass had smote her heart with prayer and tears! A warm, deep, ardent love flowed through her soul toward those with whom she had shared the pleasure and blessing of a common paternal home; but for years no answering love had come, no word of friendliness had been exchanged."

"Was ever one afflicted as I am?" she cried, in the fulness of her agony. How many have uttered this wail of woe! From how many hearts yet unborn must go up these words!

A gentle tap at the door once more recalled her to herself; and, on going out she admitted Mr. Wellmont.

"I have seen Dr. Humphrey," he said, "and he told me she was better. I could not stay away."

As he entered the sick room a slight breeze rustled the curtains of the window, which sound awoke Edith; and, as he saw her look upon him with recognition, he took her hand within his own, and pressed it to his lips. A new light awoke

in her sad eyes, and a faint color came to her cheeks; but as suddenly it faded. She closed her eyes to shut in the tears that were stealing softly down to her bosom, and she trembled with a returning sense of overcoming fear.

"Would to Heaven," said he, very much moved, "I could bear myself the pain you suffer through my unfortunate agency!"

"Not that," murmured Edith very faintly, "but my dream!"

"You can forgive me, Edith?" inquired Mr. Wellmont, bending lower over her.

She replied with a look of peace, while a smile of kindness rested upon her pale face; he seemed actuated by a sudden impulse, and bent his lips almost to hers; but, quickly checking himself, he stood again erect and silent, retaining her hand within his own, upon which he gazed abstractedly, as if lost in thought.

"Is there nothing I can do for you? Anything in my power will not be too much for you to require," he said, at length, to Mrs. Hale, who sat weeping convulsively.

"Pray for her," whispered Edith, brokenly; "my pain is nothing to hers."

Mr. Wellmont knelt in that room of sorrow, and offered prayer for those stricken ones; prayer so fervent, so kind, and so true to their sufferings and necessities, that it seemed to call down spiritual blessings, and make the path of trust and patience more perfect to their recognition. Mrs. Hale thanked Heaven for raising up such a friend in the time of the desertion of those who had once been dearer than friends.

After this, hearing the steps of another visitor in the next room, Mrs. Hale went out; and Mr. Wellmont, as if struck with some new recollection, went to his hat, from which he took a rare and beautiful bouquet, and placed it in Edith's hand. She was too weak to raise the flowers; but her glance upon them expressed more than many words.

"They are cut mostly from some flowering plants which were sent me by my mother, a few weeks since," he said. "They were very dear to me, and therefore I bring them to you." He paused, for his voice had deepened into peculiar tenderness. It was a moment of tremulous bliss to Edith. With the melody of those words of love sounding in every chamber of her soul, she could have died like the breath of an Æolian harp.

"Holy and fervent love! had earth but rest,  
For thee and thine, this world were all too fair."

Much more Mr. Wellmont would have said, as it seemed by the expression he wore, had not Mrs. Hale reappeared with a visitor, whom he did not at first recognize in the dim light of the room; but he soon heard a voice, with a rustle of silks, which he knew belonged to Mrs. Witherell.

"Ah, Mr. Wellmont!—you, indeed! I declare you frightened me!" Then to Mrs. Hale she said: "I know you told me some one was in here; but I didn't understand. I thought it was a lady, of course!"

On going up to Edith, in her usual loud, assured voice, Mrs. Witherell inquired how she felt,—expressing much

commiseration, which, for the most part, seemed addressed to Mr. Wellmont.

"A great change," she observed to Edith, who was suffering new pain from the excitement produced by seeing one who so thoroughly aroused and disturbed her, "from that horrid factory to this still room, with so many in to see you."

"Not a pleasant or desirable change, by any means, Mrs. Witherell," said Mr. Wellmont, with a flush upon his brow.

"O, I suppose the pain more than balances the pleasure of so many attentions!" she continued, glancing at the bouquet; "but I am one of those who think it a duty to look on the bright side."

Mrs. Hale saw how rapidly Edith was getting worse, with painful apprehensions; but she durst not ask Mrs. Witherell out; for she seemed to hold it a condescension to come in at all, and the poor cannot be scrupulous about such things. Mr. Wellmont immediately took his departure, and Mrs. Witherell sat down, with an evident determination of making herself comfortable, — loosening her bonnet-strings, and using her fan violently, filling the room with a continuous, unpleasant sound. Then, as she conversed, inquiring every particular about Edith's accident, she contrived to examine the various articles of the room with careful scrutiny. Mrs. Hale discovered this, and with new discomfort followed the glances of Mrs. Witherell's eyes, and so spied a little dust upon a moulding, one or two articles out of place, and several shreds upon the braided carpet. She was also painfully reminded of her poverty by means of this examination, for she could not

wholly forget the great contrast between her present style of living and that of her past life.

In the few minutes of her call, Mrs. Witherell's vision seemed quite equal to that of the butterfly, on whose eye Leeuwenhoek counted thousands of facets, each of which was a full organ of sight. Edith became momentarily more excited, and Mrs. Hale more anxious, when, to her relief, Dr. Humphrey again appeared; and, divining how matters were at a glance, he whispered, almost savagely, "What is all this fuss here for? Don't you know Edith's life depends on her being kept quiet?"

"Is the case very critical, doctor?" inquired Mrs. Witherell, with her blandest smile.

"Very critical!" he exclaimed; "would n't you think your case critical if the wheel of a chaise had gone over you, my dear madam?"

"I suppose I should," replied Mrs. Witherell, laughing nervously; then added, as she saw Mrs. Hale's distress: "It is always my way, I may say my misfortune, to laugh when anything ill happens. Before now, when my Simon has fallen and hurt him, I have laughed till it seemed I never could stop."

"I tell you all, this room must be still, — still as a well," said the doctor, holding wide the door.

"Well, I'll go!" said Mrs. Witherell. "But I had nearly forgotten that I brought over something for Edith." As she went out to the adjoining room for her package, Edith became quite expectant; for precious, indeed, is such a remembrance

to the sick, and more especially to one in need. Mrs. Hale's countenance fell as she saw Mrs. Witherell return with a book. "I thought you would want something to read to Edith, by and by," she said, "and I suppose you haven't many books. It is the life of Luther, a most excellent and instructive work. Just see that it does not get injured, and return it at your leisure."

"There is an account of the Diet of Worms in it, isn't there?" inquired Dr. Humphrey, who could not resist the temptation.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Witherell, "I believe there is; though it is some time since I read the book myself."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the doctor, in a tone too low for other ears than those for which his words were intended; "it is my honest opinion a diet of something else — perhaps blanc-mange, or a jelly — would be more acceptable here."

"O, you funny man!" exclaimed Mrs. Witherell, regarding the whole thing as an excellent joke. "But I must say one thing more before I go," she added, going back to Edith, who now lay moaning with pain. "I wish to caution you, and you, Mrs. Hale, to be careful of appearances. Don't let too many gentlemen in here, especially single gentlemen. If Edith *should* lose her good name, it would be far worse than losing her life." And thus she at last withdrew.

Many days of pain and tears went wearily by before Edith became perceptibly better; but gradually she gained a little strength, and at last Dr. Humphrey gave his opinion that she would quite recover in time. The bone which had been

broken in her shoulder had been successfully united ; and this proved to be the most serious injury.

Mary Pickering had persuaded her father to permit her to remain with her friend continually ; and she had been a most affectionate nurse to Edith, and a careful assistant to Mrs. Hale. But, among the many who had shown their friendliness in various offices of love during this season of distress, no one had manifested a more earnest and constant interest in Edith's case than Mr. Wellmont. When she had so far gained strength as to be able to listen to reading, he came almost daily with an entertaining book from his library, and read aloud, pausing often to converse upon some topic of interest suggested by the reading, or to explain an allusion to the classical myths or historical facts with which his listeners were unacquainted. At such times his manner was most attractive and impressive, but always dignified, though devoid of clerical restraints.

These hours were more precious to Edith than she was then aware. The suffering she had endured seemed scarcely too great a sacrifice for such exceeding pleasure as the society of Mr. Wellmont afforded. The mother, well knowing the intricate labyrinth of the human heart, observed these things until she trembled for Edith's future peace ; and, when they were quite by themselves, she ventured very kindly to caution her not to let her heart presume too far upon this condescension. Edith opened her sad eyes, as if at a loss to comprehend her meaning.

"I mean, my darling," said Mrs. Hale, "in plain words,

that, having seen more of the world than you have, I fear, by the interest you manifest in Mr. Wellmont, that he is becoming too necessary to your happiness, — especially if you must by and by resign him to another.”

“Resign him to another!” repeated Edith. “He is not mine to resign; and, then, if he were, to what other do you refer?”

“I know of no one,” said Mrs. Hale. “But that does not relieve you of the necessity of being very careful not to have him too much in your thoughts; for, my dear child, you must know that a man like Mr. Wellmont would never think of uniting his destiny with our family.”

“No,” said Edith, slowly and painfully; “and yet,” she added, “I have heard of great men selecting wives from as humble life as mine. It is a maxim, ‘Equality is no rule in Love’s grammar.’”

“Have you thought well of the great disparity between Mr. Wellmont and yourself?” The mother’s voice faltered. “Heaven knows what you might have been, my child, had justice been done me by my family, and your father not been so cruelly defrauded. But I do wrong,” continued Mrs. Hale; “God knows what is best for each of his children.”

“Yes, dearest mother,” said Edith, “if I had been endowed with the advantages which many possess, I might have been a simpleton, or so inflated with pride and vanity as never to have been beloved. As it is, I have many dear friends whose love I could ill afford to exchange for such a compensation.”



"I trust, Edith, you will be guarded in this matter of which I have spoken," concluded Mrs. Hale. "You may think you are perfectly secure now ; but I have seen so many hearts wounded in a similar way, I cannot think of you without fear. You will be alone in the world soon, and God grant"—the mother could not go on now. The idea of separation was nothing new to her ; but Edith's look of distress appealed to her heart too strongly for her to overcome. The thought came bitterly, "Had she so long struggled with disease, and Edith deceived herself with fallacious hope as to the inevitable result?"

"I know you will get better soon," said Edith. "You have over-exerted yourself for me, of late ; but, now that I am regaining my health so rapidly, I shall soon be able to take the place of nurse, and you will be yourself again."

"No !" replied the mother, sadly ; "it is vain for me to encourage you or myself any longer. The disease with which I have long contended is overcoming me at last, and what I have to do must be done quickly."

A short time after this, Mr. Wellmont came again, and conversed so cheerfully and pleasantly, that Edith forgot her mother's warning, and was not less interested than ever. Before her illness, he had commenced instructing her in Latin, and she was now so far recovered that the lessons were resumed. Her progress had been rapid and thorough, so that she had become able to translate in one of the advanced works by the assistance of her teacher ; and, as they sat together, Edith rendering the words and Mr. Wellmont looking after,

often glancing at the face of his pupil, so pale, yet so beautiful with blushes when a word chanced to be stumbled over falsely; her brown, luxuriant hair put softly from her spiritual forehead, and her large, dark eyes, radiant with love, yet ever sad and reflective, it was no marvel that the mother, who observed it all, was troubled. Edith was gifted with a voice of peculiar sweetness; it was not quick-toned and sonorous, like the gay carol of a bird, but so calm and purely melodious that the listener was wiled into a deep and serene enjoyment. As Mr. Wellmont listened, he recalled a couplet from Horace :

“ Both tongues united sweeter sounds produce,  
Like Chian mixed with the Falernian juice.”

Edith passed a moment to consult her lexicon, and he fell to comparing the merits of their Latin author with those of Milton. After several criticisms, as an example of Milton's felicity of style and correspondence to his idea in point, he repeated, with great impressiveness, betraying the language of his own sentiments :

“ For while I sit with thee, I seem in heaven,  
And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear  
Than fruits of palm-tree pleasantest to thirst  
And hunger both, from labor at the hour  
Of sweet repast ; they satiate, and soon fill,  
Though pleasant ; but thy words, with grace divine  
Imbued, bring to their sweetness no satiety ! ”

Edith resumed her reading without venturing to lift her

eyes above her book ; for, in that moment, she would not have betrayed a consciousness or embarrassment for worlds.

That afternoon, Mr. Wellmont received a letter from his mother, which, for the first time in his life, occasioned him unpleasant reflections. It was read and re-read, till every word had burned itself into his heart. Long did he pause to think, as each time he read these sentences :

“My son, the manner in which you write of that young girl you call Edith Hale alarms me. When you first mentioned her name in your letters, I felt unpleasantly, although you defended yourself from any especial interest in her. But of late you write of her with an earnestness which cannot result from the ordinary sentiments a minister feels for any afflicted member of the parish. Is it possible, my dear Paul, that one so educated and accustomed to the refinements of life can take pleasure in the society of a poor, unsophisticated factory-girl ? Perish the thought, for the most distant allusion overwhelms me with unspeakable grief ! You may be disposed to reply that she possesses many superior graces of intellect and manner. When a man is in love he always sees perfections in the object which are only the reflection of his own imagination, and have no real existence ; as in the optical illusion of mirage, which causes remote objects to appear inversed, as if thrown from a mirror.

“But, if you persist that you are correct in this position, is it wise for you to marry one who is in the lowest grade of poverty, so that you will ever be obliged to provide her entire support, and that of her mother besides ? Where, then, in

my declining years, is my prospect of a home with you, my son? With pain do I ask you to recall all the long, straitened past of your life, wherein I have watched over you, and labored for you to the extent of my ability, suffering always from feeble health, but regarding no sacrifice too great for your good! And now, when you have just begun to live for yourself, and to attain a position among your fellow-men, will you peril your influence among your people, who, believe me, will never submit to the selection of such an one from among them to fill the high position of the wife of their minister? Will you insult the families of your associate clergy, by introducing among them an uncongenial person, but lately graduated from a factory? Will you (though, perhaps, the least consideration of all) wound my feelings beyond all cure, blight all my high hopes for you, and deprive me of my latest consolations, by thus immolating yourself on such an unworthy altar? No! I know my son too well to believe this distressing supposition for a moment. When next you write, reassure me, my dear Paul, that you have no such intentions, that I may be once more happy and hopeful in your behalf."

Again, in recurring to the subject of her son's marriage, she wrote: "I have long hoped you would find a companion worthy of yourself, who would prove a blessing to your parish and your home. If possible, choose a wife who has property in possession or prospective; for a minister has but a poor prospect in life, if he have not other resources for support, in case of any exigency, than the precarious dole of a fickle-minded parish. Your wife should also be thoroughly edu-

cated at the best schools, and refined by intimacy with the most correct society, in order to contribute to your happiness, and to satisfy you, through all coming life, that your choice was well made."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MEETING AND PARTING.

MR. WELLMONT was never indifferent to the words of his mother, and this letter occasioned him long and painful reflection. It unclosed his eyes to a truth of which he was scarcely aware before, that his sentiments towards Edith had grown into a love too strong to throw away lightly.

Yet the arguments of his mother fell upon his heart with the weight of conviction. To increase his discomfort, for troubles never come singly, one or two leading persons of his church took occasion, about this time, to inform him that it was whispered he was too attentive to Mrs. Hale and Edith for mere friendship. They added, too, that they did not believe it was possible he could think of marrying a poor girl like her, who had worked in the factory; it would be a disgrace to the parish, and a scandal to the clergy.

Mr. Wellmont felt all this keenly, for he had no disposition to brave the opposition of the world in an affair of the heart. But more than all was he influenced by the plea of his mother respecting his duty to secure a provision for her future years. That she might ever suffer because he was unable to

give her assistance, was a thought he could not cherish for a moment. He remembered that he had made no pledge to Edith, spoken no unmistakable word of love; and he soon began to reason with his heart upon the necessity of resigning his passion to higher interests and aspirations. And now for weeks and months of bitter self-conflict he was one of the most miserable of men.

As he continued the discharge of his pastoral duties in Waterbury, he became acquainted with different members of the clergy in the vicinity. Two of these, who had some business to transact with him connected with a denominational association, met him in his study, one afternoon, and lingered to discuss some private matters pertaining to the experience of their profession.

"It is surprising how very conceited the people are becoming!" remarked Mr. Lund, who was a heavy, sombre-looking man, and carried great reserve with him, — speaking always in that tone which is supposed by many to be a sign of unusual holiness.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Wellmont, by way of eliciting information; "I was hardly aware of the fact, though my experience is not commensurate with yours."

"I am very much troubled to keep my parishioners in their place;" and he now threw himself back in his chair, looking thoroughly formidable; "they do not scruple to come to me, at all times, with unreasonable requests, and put themselves forward, upon assumed rights, altogether too much. I wish I lived in the days of the old standing order, when the people

truly and humbly revered their minister, and went to him for spiritual and even temporal direction, as obedient servants to their master."

"I have little difficulty on this point," observed Mr. Swinton, "for my people are generally unobtrusive and respectful, excepting one or two only, whom I manage by throwing them something else to bite when they snap at me; as, some great political or moral question of the day; and, if that don't work the right way, I bring them into good-humor by playing upon their weak points."

"Much may be effected by that course, I knew," observed Mr. Wellmont, smiling.

"That is what I never descend to!" remarked Mr. Lund, looking down, in imagination, upon his people, with an air of one of the "shaggy Centaurs of the hills." "I make my people know, in the first place, and always, that I shall not preach to please them, neither shall I act to please them. If I think anything is duty, I shall do it; if I think any doctrine should be preached, I shall preach it, let it hit who or where it will. I bring them much more into their places, and I keep them there," — here he struck down his hand heavily upon the table, — "than I should in any other way. I glory in telling a man his faults, or a church its faults," continued Mr. Lund, "if I am slain for the truth's sake. I have left six parishes already because I preached the truth; and I am ready to leave six more, if need be."

"You are getting earnest, brother Lund," said Mr. Swinton.

"T is time, and high time, we were all earnest; let us do



whatsoever our hands find to do, with all our might, while the day lasts."

"I think brother Lund is right in his premises, but not in his conclusions," said Mr. Wellmont. "That we should preach the truth without fear of man is certainly commanded us; but we should not necessarily conclude that the truth must be presented in a strength and proportion to all people alike, without respect to different temperaments and prejudices; neither should the Gospel of peace be preached as though the hearers were to be driven by force. In this connection, I am reminded of what an aged minister whom I once knew used to say: 'It is better to say *canan* to the people than *st'b'oy*;' and I think the spirit of that homely precept will go further and better, every way, than so much use of whips and threats. It is allied too nearly to barbarity, this violence, and taking the kingdom of heaven by force in this way. A traveller tells us that in Khavareem, one of the Turkish cities, in every mosque a whip was hung up, with which every person who absented himself from worship was soundly flogged by the priest, besides being fined in five dinars. Now, such a spirit as that is not the one for us."

"I will tell you something of my management," said Mr. Swinton, who was a dapper, exquisite man, with a prevailing vein of sentiment in his organization; "I intend to preach the truth, because woe is me if I preach any other gospel; but this necessity does not demand that I should preach so as to offend two thirds of my people, and gradually, but certainly, destroy all my influence. As I said, I sometimes make

merchandise of people's foibles. For instance, some time since I learned, by one of those benevolent individuals who esteem it a pleasure and a duty to enlighten me about what people say of me, that a certain prominent lady of my church had taken serious offence at something I had said in a meeting, and that she was dispensing her displeasure very freely among the ladies in general. I knew that this would not do at all, for the voice of one leading woman goes further in favor of, or against, a minister, than the votes of half a dozen men. Shortly after this, occurred a meeting of our Ladies' Sewing Society, and I made it convenient to attend early in the afternoon, which is contrary to my custom. I entered the parlor where sat the ladies, chatting and sewing as busy as bees, in my happiest style (allow me to say); and, after speaking to every one present, I selected my seat beside that lady who was so displeased with me, and endeavored to make myself as agreeable as possible. At first, she was rather chilly; but I soon moderated the atmosphere by several clever observations. Then I called for sewing, and the ladies about me began to laugh immoderately; but, as I persisted, Mrs. L—— (my enemy) passed me a basket of work, from which I selected a square of patch-work, inquiring directly if the square did not represent an album bed-quilt, secretly intended as a gift to their pastor. Mrs. L—— was very good-humored at this, and when I asked her to thread my needle was in perfect ecstasy. So I sewed and conversed, keeping the ladies in excellent spirits, and gradually attracting all in the room about me till I was completely enclosed by beauty and fra-

grance, like a rose-bug in the heart of a hundred-leaved rose! I assure you I had no more enemies among the ladies after that, for I made every one of them thread my needle once at least, awkwardly pulling out the thread for that express purpose. They all examined my work when it was finished, and declared it a perfect performance, though I knew it was done execrably. What was more, brethren, when the bed-quilt to which that square belonged was finished, it was presented to their 'beloved pastor;' although they had originally intended to sell it, and add the proceeds to their charity funds. As I linger in bed of mornings, I often look at that square, which was placed exactly in the centre of the quilt, and think that was one of the happiest hits of my life!"

"You have a wife, Mr. Swinton," said Mr. Lund, very seriously; "I wish to inquire if she accompanied you to that society meeting."

"She was away then on a visit out of town," replied Mr. Swinton, rather reluctantly.

"I have heard that she is out of health, and suffers occasionally from alarming nervous attacks," continued Mr. Lund.

"Yes!" said Mr. Swinton; "but I can't see what connection that has to the subject in point."

"Can't you? Well, I will make it a subject of prayer that the eyes of your understanding may be opened," rejoined Mr. Lund, with deepening solemnity.

"After all," thought Mr. Wellmont, "Mr. Lund means well, it is evident, but errs from a lack of judgment, and

knowledge of human nature, in his vocation as a public teacher of the truth; this reproof to Mr. Swinton I like, and it discovers that there is, at least, one vein of pure gold in his character." But, desirous of changing a subject which seemed to be growing into unpleasantness, he said to his friends, "I have got along very amicably with the people in this place thus far, and I have already formed many pleasant attachments."

"I see but two things which you lack," said Mr. Swinton, "a parsonage and a wife; and I think I can put you in the way to obtain both, independent of your parish, which is always desirable. I know a lady who, I think, would do nicely for you, though she has not been exactly educated for a minister's wife. She is a cousin of mine, and the daughter of a wealthy merchant of the city of R——."

At this suggestion a shadow crossed Mr. Wellmont's brow, and the figure of Edith Hale, in all her grace and truthfulness, arose unbidden before his mind; and it was difficult to waive the picture aside.

"I am not an adept in such matters, and, really, you must excuse me," he said to Mr. Swinton.

"It is amusing, certainly, to hear one with your conversational talent talk in that way; one so well provided as to have a clever epigram or a classical titbit at every turn! But, if I must indoctrinate you into the mode of procedure in such cases, allow me to repeat, in the language of another, what you can first address to the lady. In fact, it is quite in your own style:

'Hear me exemplify love's Latin word,  
As thus : Hearts joined *amore* : take *a* from thence,  
Then *more* is the perfect moral sense ;  
Plural in manners, which in thee do shine  
Saint-like, immortal, spotless, and divine !  
Take *m* away, *ore* in beauty's name  
Craves an eternal trophy to thy fame.' "

"Thank you," said Mr. Wellmont, with a smile of hidden meaning. "I will try and profit by your instructions. However, I have no ambition to be another Frauenlob, of whom, excuse me if I say, you have already reminded me. In fact, it strikes me he will very nearly prove your archetype."

"How so? I don't comprehend," rejoined Mr. Swinton.

"Have you never read of Henry Von Missen?" said Mr. Wellmont. "He received as an honor, so the account goes, the name of Henry Frauenlob, because the principal theme of his songs was the virtues of the fair sex. For this reason he was so highly esteemed by the ladies of his time that they are said to have carried his body with their own hands to the grave, which they bathed with their tears, and around which they poured so much wine as to inundate the whole floor of the church. I think the ladies of your time will express the juice of roses for their libation at your demise, as your language shows your heart to be always wandering among the flowers.

"I am no match for you in a contest of this sort," said Mr. Swinton; "so I will close my remarks, as we have it in our sermons, by arranging that you must exchange with me on

the Sabbath after next, and I will contrive to have this lady meet you at my house."

Mr. Wellmont hesitated, and examined his note-book to ascertain if he had any engagement to conflict with the proposed arrangement, for he was more than half inclined to offer an excuse; but Mr. Swinton rallied him upon his bachelor propensities, and was so earnest in the matter, that he finally obtained a reluctant consent.

Meanwhile, as the young minister thus sat and communed with his friends, in the little brown cottage, under the majestic maple-trees and fragrant balm-gileads, Edith sat, and watched by her mother. Mrs. Hale had failed rapidly of late, so that she was obliged to remain in her room altogether; but, unwilling to take to her bed, lest it might alarm Edith, she sat during the day in her arm-chair, supported by pillows, and working on some light sewing, when able. On this afternoon, the weather being unusually oppressive, she had found herself too weak to sew, and she remained quite motionless in her chair. The thin, pale hand which lay upon her bosom seemed now clasped invisibly by the angel of the dark valley, and her eyes were looking far away into the blessed land, from which the veil was fast being removed.

She had thus sat for some time, when she roused herself, and said: "Edith, my dear, while I have strength I must tell you yet something more. You know already some of the circumstances of my marriage with your father; how I was disowned by my family, so that they never held communication with me from that time. But I have never thought it

wise to detail to you all my sufferings in this connection. If my mother had not died in my girlhood, the bitterness of my fortune would have been mitigated by her love and intercession with colder and harder hearts."

"But what occasioned so much opposition?" interrupted Edith. "My father was always good and noble-spirited."

"I will tell you, briefly. My father was one of the wealthiest men in Boston. He was proud, exact, and unflinching in all his purposes, to such a degree that his family regarded him with absolute fear. By his desire we were surrounded with luxury, provided with the most expensive masters for the acquirement of our education and accomplishments, and allowed every privilege deemed consistent with our rank.

"My sister inherited the disposition of our father, and became one of the proudest of women. Her heart was never reached save through the avenues of worldly interest. But my noble brother was the reverse,—always considerate and generous. After the death of our excellent mother his health began to decline, and he was sent on the tour of Europe. He sailed from New York, to which place I accompanied him, where I remained some time after, on a visit to the family of an aunt. Here I met your father, who was then a principal clerk in the extensive mercantile house of my uncle. He had entered the city, I was told, a poor orphan-boy, without money or friends, in search of his fortune; and, chancing to attract the attention of my uncle by the performance of some valuable but accidental service for him, was received into his employ, in which situation he soon

won unusual favor for his honesty and diligence. We became in love with each other. He told me the tale of his previous life, which was clouded by many sorrows, and I loved him none the less. But, when this came to the knowledge of my father, he was enraged, and bade me at once discontinue all acquaintance with the *poor upstart*, as he called him. This I could not do; for, unworldly as I was, his poverty and obscurity seemed no sufficient cause for such a course. We were married, and my husband lost his situation in the result. This was a source of much anxiety and trouble; but we struggled along through many privations, to which I was all unused, forbearing to apply to my father for assistance, because I knew well he would be inexorable in his displeasure; and, as I had thwarted him in his design of marrying me to a man of wealth and position, I was also too proud to humble myself thus before him. In time we overcame our difficulties, and your father acquired a considerable fortune. Weary of city life, we came here to Waterbury, and settled in a beautiful place, which attracted our attention while passing it on a journey. We thought to spend our days here in ease and quietness; but we were defrauded by a false-hearted friend, and, when your father died, and we were compelled to move into this cottage, which had been tenanted by one of our laborers, our accumulated misfortunes hastened a tendency to disease in my system, which I inherited from my mother. But I know it is all for the best. If my dear brother were only living now, I could leave you in peace. But I will trust God for your protection."



"I remember you once spoke of receiving news from him after his departure. Did you never hear but once before you learned his death?" inquired Edith.

"Only once did our family hear directly. He was on the Mediterranean, and sent a letter by a ship homeward bound. After that the news came that the vessel in which he sailed was found without a soul on board, and rifled of all its cargo; it was supposed that they were all captured and killed, while the cargo was taken as plunder. Since then I have never felt as before; and often from my sleep I have been startled, thinking my brother had come to me again.

"But what I began especially to tell you," resumed Mrs. Hale, brokenly, amid her tears, "was that, when I am gone, and you have recovered your health, in a convenient time you should go to Boston, and make yourself known to your aunt, who is now the only surviving member of my family. After the death of my father, she received all his estate (except one dollar, given to disinherit me), which, with the property of her husband, made her the mistress of immense wealth. But I have since heard that her husband proved himself to be very unprincipled and dissipated, and has made great inroads upon their property. At the time you were obliged to enter the factory, I wrote to her, stating our circumstances, and appealing to her compassion; but no answer was returned. A personal interview might possibly dispose her to regard you more favorably than she has me in my misfortunes; but, if she repulses you, don't be discouraged. Remember, if you trust in God, he will be more gracious to you than any earthly

friend." Her voice became weaker, and she was compelled to pause. At length, summoning all her strength to the effort, she continued: "There is one revelation connected with your father's history, dear Edith, which I have delayed telling you for obvious reasons; but now it is best that the secret should not die with me. Of this no one in this vicinity is aware; so you need fear no disgrace."

"Disgrace!" repeated Edith, with surprise, and half imagining the mind of her mother wandered. "What circumstances connected with my father can be associated with that word?"

"There was a shadow upon him from his birth! But, O! it fell not upon my heart, obscured no love of mine! Your father was good and true always. Revere his memory, for he was worthy of your love and reverence. I cannot tell you more at this time," she said, in reply to Edith's look of interrogation. "Now, kiss me darling; I am much fatigued, and wish to sleep a while. Until I awake, you may sit in the next room, where it is lighter, and more cheerful."

As Edith kissed her mother, she was startled at the chill rigidity of her face; for the room was partially darkened, and she had observed no change.

"Are you not worse, mother?" she exclaimed. "Let me call one of the neighbors."

"No, dear; I would rather be alone. I shall be better when I awake. One more kiss."

Edith embraced her long and fervently, and, with a sad heart, went out and sat by herself. Presently she saw Mrs.

Linn coming around the yard, and approaching the door. The old lady's black bonnet was never more welcome to Edith's eyes; and, dropping her work, she went out to meet her.

"I am very glad you have come!" Edith exclaimed, "for I was feeling unusually lonely." And the tears came to her eyes.

"I have been down into the village," said Mrs. Linn, "and it is so warm I found I must rest me before reaching home; and I wished to see how your mother was to-day."

"Mother is not so well this afternoon; she has just gone to sleep. I have felt very anxious about her, all day; but I suppose it was because of an unpleasant dream last night," Edith replied. They then talked of Mr. Linn, and of various matters, till a half-hour was consumed, when Mrs. Linn observed that she felt sufficiently rested, and she thought she would leave for home.

"I will go in and see if mother has not waked," said Edith. "She would regret not to see you, it is so seldom you can come." But, scarcely had she entered her mother's room, before she called Mrs. Linn, in a voice of alarm.

"She is so still and pale, I am afraid she has fainted!" she said, hastily putting away the curtains to admit the air.

"No," said Mrs. Linn, after examining her closely, "your mother has not fainted; she is dead!"

"Dead!" repeated Edith; "it is impossible!"

"Yes, dear Edith, she has gone! But, be consoled with

the thought of the trouble she has left, and the peace and rest into which she has now entered."

Edith was so overcome that she sank down like one stricken with a heavy blow. Her senses were paralyzed with grief, and her heart wailed with a pain she had never known before. At length, arousing herself with a strong effort, she took the cold hand that had so often folded hers, and pressed it to her lips, saying to herself, "O, how thankful I am that I was always obedient to my mother!"

Precious, indeed, was this consolation to the orphan Edith now, which she would not have exchanged for the richest inheritance, if it were linked with the thought that she had wounded her mother's heart with the injuries of perverseness and ingratitude.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE NEW PRECEPTOR. — A CASE OF DESPERATION.

THE academy at Waterbury had been vacated for the last quarter, owing to the illness and departure of the preceptor. But, as the winter months approached, it was announced by the trustees that a gentleman of very superior attainments had been secured, and that the school was about to be reöpened under the most auspicious circumstances. Deacon Dennis, the acting member of the board, had met the future teacher, in one of his business visits to Boston, at the house of a mutual acquaintance. Having alluded incidentally to the place of his residence, the gentleman, he said, seemed vastly interested, asking him a variety of questions about the people; and, coming at length to the Pickerings, he was more than ever minute in his inquiries. Finally, on learning that there was an academy, he had offered himself as the teacher for one term.

"It is most unaccountable," said the deacon, "why he should wish to leave his home in Boston to teach in a country place in the winter season. I was told that he is the only son of a very wealthy man, and has qualifications sufficient to

be a professor in a college ; but, to the surprise of his friends, he seemed determined to come ; and, knowing it to be such a rare chance for us, I engaged him at once."

When this intelligence had circulated through the village, great was the excitement about the new preceptor ; and many young ladies, who had abandoned all thoughts of attending school again, now remembered that there were studies which they would like to pursue further, or to review more thoroughly. Never before had such a number of pupils entered their names for a single term.

It was a day of unusual interest that brought the arrival of the new teacher ; and many were the conjectures as to what family he would select for his boarding-place. Deacon Dennis, Mr. Pickering, in behalf of his wife and daughters, and several other persons, solicited the honor ; but when the stranger came, and was allowed his choice, he accepted the offer of Mr. Pickering without hesitation, alleging as his reason a slight acquaintance which existed between that family and his father.

On the evening succeeding his instalment in their home, Mary came in to her friend Edith in such a state of excitement, that Edith was nearly alarmed at her appearance.

"Is n't it wonderful!" exclaimed Mary, the color deepening into beauty on her olive cheeks, "I have found the preceptor is none other than Horace Raymond, whom I met at grandfather's, last spring ! I might have known before that it was he, if I had thought to inquire ; for I suppose our family knew. I thought I should have fainted when I saw him for

the first time at the tea-table; for I was not asked to meet him in the parlor with the girls. Such a look as he gave me when our eyes met! and he was just about to speak, when ma directed me, by a glance, and a whisper from Julia, to go out to the kitchen and help Gillis make preparations in Mr. Raymond's chamber. I was so delighted, though, to find it was really he, that I forgot my disappointment, and went about so gladly that I felt like walking in the air.

"But, after tea, Julia said to me, 'Moll, Mr. Raymond says he became acquainted with you at grandfather's. We were mortified to death at the thought of his getting an idea of our family from such a countryish, simple thing as you are, and we all agree that you must keep out of sight; and don't you come to the table again with us, while he is here.'

" 'I am going to attend the academy this term, I suppose?' I ventured, with a swelling heart.

" 'You, who are not fit to class with common-school children, think of going to the academy!' she exclaimed, with a look of disdain.

" 'But I was promised I might, if I would go without new dresses last summer, and not let father know about it,' said I, feeling so badly I could scarcely keep from sobbing aloud.

" 'You will not go,' she said, 'so you might as well content yourself first as last; it would be such a disgrace to us to have Mr. Raymond know that we had one in our family so awkward and stupid!'

"I went to my chamber, and cried; for it was the severest disappointment I ever felt, dear Edith. The prospect of attend-

ing school again had beguiled many a sad hour, and more especially did I wish to go, now that Mr. Raymond was to be our teacher. Then I thought of you, my ever good friend, and I stole out of the back door, making my way down by the garden, that my sisters might not again be offended at the sight of me. And who should I meet at the garden-gate but father and Mr. Raymond! They were looking at some rare plants which father had been protecting for the winter, and it was so nearly dark, I thought they would not notice me. I was hurrying by, when Mr. Raymond stepped forward, and, taking my hand within both of his own, spoke to me so kindly, and looked down into my face so like himself, that I was overcome with confusion.

“ ‘What! in tears, Mary, when I have just come?’ he said, in a low tone. I was utterly beyond the power of speech; for the thought of what Julia had just called me was every moment in my mind, to oppress me with my unworthiness.

“ I made a movement to go, but he retained my hand, looking into my eyes so searchingly, just as he can upon occasion, that, despite all my efforts at control, I know I must have appeared very singularly to him.

“ ‘I shall see you in my school, Mary, to-morrow,’ he said. I shook my head, for I could not reply. I think I looked so disappointed he must have guessed my thoughts; for, said he, turning to father, ‘Is not this daughter, Mr. Pickering, to be one of my pupils?’

“ ‘I don’t know as she is sufficiently advanced,’ replied father, with hesitation.



" 'I am somewhat acquainted with her mind,' said Mr. Raymond, 'and I shall regret that I ever came to Waterbury if I am not to have the pleasure of assisting her to progress in her studies.'

" 'I think she may go, then,' said father.

" 'Certainly,' said Mr. Raymond; 'I shall depend on her constant attendance.'

"I hurried away, only too joyful at my changed prospect. And, now, dear Edith," concluded Mary, "I am going to make such an effort to get along in my studies, and to conceal my ignorance as much as possible; for I should be so mortified to have Julia's words about my disgracing the family prove true!"

"Do not be too anxious upon that point," said Edith, smiling. "I predict that you will be the last of your family to do that. I will assist you in whatever way it is possible for me; and, with such a vigorous determination to improve, you cannot fail of success."

"Dear me! if I only knew as much as my sisters!" said Mary, regretfully.

"I would rather you would be as you are," rejoined Edith. "But what studies do you propose to take, this term?"

The two girls sat together, and discussed all their plans, till late that evening, imagining many beautiful fabrics of wisdom which were to be woven in the golden hours of the future; and both were more hopeful than ever before.

"I saw Mr. Wellmont to-day," said Edith, as Mary was about to leave her, "and he seemed remarkably sad and ab-

stracted. But he spoke to me so kindly of my lost mother, and the home of the blessed who die in the Lord, that I was consoled more than ever since her death."

She did not tell Mary that his manner was changed to a melancholy reserve, which seemed entirely foreign to his nature, and the cause of which she could not divine; that, when he was about to turn away, he held her hand so much longer than was necessary, and wore such a look of pain, then left her so abruptly, that she was startled; — and that his sorrowful face had haunted her memory since. These were thoughts which Edith could not impart to her friend.

After the death of her mother, Edith seemed to acquire new strength, and maturity of character, with which to meet the exigencies of life. The tribulation through which she had been brought had wrought out for her that "patience," "experience," and "hope," which are the result of no other earthly refining. And, perhaps, too, the blessing of Him, who has promised to be a father to the orphan, was more richly than ever her support and resource. She was determined, by the grace of God, to go forward in the strife of the world, and, if possible, win for herself a place which should the more nearly correspond with the yearning aspirations of her nature.

And now she entered upon her new pupilage with the ardor of her energetic spirit, sparing herself no effort, no sacrifice of which her health was capable. Within the first week, the school became so numerous, and the consequent duties multiplied so rapidly, that Mr. Raymond found it necessary to call

upon the trustees for an assistant. As it was desirable to select one from among the pupils, he waited cautiously to ascertain which one of all the school was the most capable and suitable every way. He finally made choice of Edith for the situation. To this the trustees strongly objected at once.

"That will never do," said they; "our children must not come under a girl like her; for she cannot be qualified to assist in their instruction."

"I speak advisedly," rejoined Mr. Raymond; "and it were better if all were as well qualified as Miss Hale. I have watched her carefully; I have compared her with other pupils; and I am certain she is thoroughly versed in many of the studies here taught; and her acquirements, united with her grace and dignity of manner, render her fitted for what we require."

The trustees demurred some time; but they saw the decision of the man with whom they now dealt; they felt his superiority of judgment in such a matter, and they durst not venture to remonstrate further.

Edith did not accept the situation without great reluctance, for she feared that a majority of the school would be offended; which, in fact, proved to be the case; and many would have left, with a keen sense of outraged dignity, had they not become too much interested in the new teacher to willingly forego the privileges of attending upon his instruction. Besides, the school was decidedly the fashion, and the malecontents could not well be out of it without loss in various ways.

Mrs. Pickering, soon understanding the strict principles of Mr. Raymond, concerning the duty of justice toward all, in domestic as well as public life, as a matter of policy so far relaxed her severity toward Mary as to permit her to sit with the family at the table; although, if she had not been allowed to go to the academy by her father, who had carried his point, for once, under the influence of Mr. Raymond, this concession never would have been made. But the sisters would not hear of her being introduced into the parlor with themselves and their companions; and, whenever Mary was inquired for, they gave out that she did not like society—she was so very bashful, and they really could not tell whether they should ever persuade her to do like other folks.

Julia was very much interested in the new preceptor; and, as he seemed to have an interest in their family, she soon indulged hopes of winning his particular regard. Indeed, he would have been besieged unmercifully, had not Celeste at that time been violently in love with a gentleman whom she had met on a visit in a neighboring town; having found, at last, a hero quite equal, she deemed, to any of the heroes of the myriad novels she had read. Claudine had recently become engaged to the young man whose picture so much annoyed Mr. Solomon Acre, upon his introduction into her studio, in company with Mr. Wellmont.

The intelligence of Claudine's engagement reaching Mr. Solomon, he took occasion to ask counsel of Mr. Wellmont, at the earliest opportunity. Announcing that he had come to talk upon "a very important subject, involving the problem

of his destiny," his pastor expressed his satisfaction that his attention had become more firmly fixed upon religious subjects.

"I don't exactly refer to that at present," said Mr. Solomon. "I am suffering under an affliction, and I come to you for consolation; though, in fact, I am past all consolation; and, now I think of it, I wish I had remained away, for, as the poet says,

'A malady

Preys on my heart, that medicine cannot reach —  
Invisible and cureless.' "

"However, he has not forgotten, in his grief, whatever it be, what 'the poet says,'" thought Mr. Wellmont. It was some time before he could ascertain the nature of Mr. Solomon's affliction, for he seemed quite at fault to express himself intelligibly. At length, out of many disjointed fragments, he put together the whole fact that the engagement of Claudine Pickering conflicted so much with his own long-cherished plans in relation to that young lady, that he was now experiencing the severest disappointment of his life.

"It is a case about which I am scarcely fitted to advise," said Mr. Wellmont. "I remember reading some excellent maxims touching disappointed affection. Terentius said, on a similar occasion, 'From henceforth I blot out of my memory all thoughts of womankind, and —'"

"Stay!" interrupted Mr. Solomon; "maxims can do me no good. You might as well repeat to a dying sinner a

passage upon the doctrine of election, or to a drowning man some of the laws of hydrodynamics. I am *past maxims!*"

"Have you fully avowed your affection to Miss Pickering, and she is aware of the suffering she now inflicts?" inquired Mr. Wellmont, desirous of touching some available point.

"No," replied Mr. Solomon; "and that is what makes me inconsolable. I delayed talking with her closely upon the subject, inferring she understood my sentiments towards her as well as I did myself. I was there to see her, evening after evening; talked, played, and rode with her, and she might have known to what all my attentions tended."

"Not if you did not explicitly tell her. Perhaps she grew impatient," said Mr. Wellmont.

"And for neglecting that one all-important question," continued Mr. Solomon, "I have got to be a miserable victim all my life! But I'll shorten it—I shan't suffer long," he added, looking fierce and unnatural.

"My dear friend," interposed Mr. Wellmont, "let me entreat you not to threaten such a sinful deed as self-destruction. Consider, for a moment, the awful significance of your words."

Mr. Solomon lifted his hands tragically, as he exclaimed,

"O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!"

"I had an uncle," he continued, "who was disappointed

in love, and he has done all manner of ridiculous things; but I shan't make myself a fool brooding over trouble."

"Rather," said Mr. Wellmont, "determine to arise and go forth into the world, where you may win a place among men which shall compensate for the slight loss you now sustain."

"Sir! slight loss do you call the loss of my whole heart, without hope of receiving another in exchange?"

"Doubtless the loss seems great to you," said Mr. Wellmont; "but it may prove the foundation of incalculable gain. Some of our greatest men, in their early lives, were disappointed in love; to which circumstance they afterwards attributed the impetus of their subsequent rapid elevation to positions of power and influence. Let me advise you, my friend, to leave this place immediately, and go where you will have no associations to recall your present pain." Mr. Solomon shook his head. "You have few ties to bind you here," continued Mr. Wellmont, "and new scenes will take your attention away from yourself, which is what you now require. Seek some distant place for your home, from which I shall expect to hear, in time, the most honorable tidings of your success and advancement in life. In fact, from the time of my early acquaintance with you, Mr. Acre, I have thought you fitted for a sphere more enlarged than you had prescribed for yourself here. You have talents that have never been summoned to the active conflict of life, and they have slumbered too long in the haunts of ease. What you may yet become, by devoting all your energies, in the fulness of

their power, to the highest and truest purposes of life, you have not dreamed. Too long have you been content with gathering flowers in the shady vales; you have forest-trees of oak yet to hew in your way; you have torrents to stem; sublime heights to climb, on whose summits you shall proudly stand and bless God for the circumstance that sent you forth,—ay, drove you as with a whip of knotted cords,—girded with a new and strong panoply with which to battle with life, and finally become victorious. Yes, you will one day look back to this time as the most fortunate of your life.”

“Spare me! spare me!” ejaculated Mr. Solomon, with a look of deprecation.

“I must tell you, freely, my friend, what I think; for I really feel no little interest in your welfare. I recall what Sylla, the dictator, said of Cæsar, when he was nothing but a ‘slipshod boy:’ ‘In him lies couchant many a Marius!’ Although this may not be fully applicable in your case, it is in part. In you, as I have said, lie dormant faculties which may prove the elements of a true man. There is nothing more foolish than to think one must become a fool because of anything so trifling as a disappointment of the heart. We must learn to discipline our hearts to trial and sacrifice of all kinds.”

“Ah! it is easier for one to preach who has never experienced, than to practise afterward,” said Mr. Solomon.

“Yes,” rejoined Mr. Wellmont, “that is true; but I know of what I speak. ‘If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off



and cast it from thee ; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' It will be incomputably more profitable for you to make this one sacrifice of your affections manfully, rather than to commit such a rash, sinful act as to destroy your whole life by a single blow, or by becoming a living spectacle of a mind destroyed, which is even worse than death.

“ I have now fresh in my memory an example of this : The other night, before the first snow-storm of the season, I was walking home from a visit to one of my parishioners, congratulating myself upon the cheerful prospect which awaited me within my comfortable rooms, — for, as you remember, the appearance of the earth was completely sad and desolate ; the winds were howling mournfully and searchingly from the intervals between the bleak hills, bringing that peculiar chilling sensation which ushers in a storm ; large flakes of snow were occasionally dropping from the dreary sky, and the darkness was coming thickly on, — when I saw approaching slowly a figure which I could not at first determine whether it were animal or human. As I rapidly advanced, I perceived it was a man in a miserable attire, and, altogether, one of the most wretched-looking objects I ever saw. His outer garment, which was intended for a coat, was composed of patches of various shapes and hues, terminating in tatters which hung to his heels ; his hands were clasped behind him, holding a small bundle tied with many strings, and from his neck hung a kind of apron which once might

have been white, the effect of which was certainly grotesque at first view. Upon this garment had been painted, in some way, the most singular caricatures of men, women, and animals, around a centre, in which was the head of a woman, radiating certain yellow lines, intended to represent the rays of the sun.

"I spoke to him. He had not, seemingly, noticed me before, but now raised his head and discovered a face on which was the impression of unmitigated misery; his eye was dark, but sunken and hopeless in expression, and his beard had grown till it lay upon his breast. 'Have you any tobacco, sir?' he inquired. Little anticipating such a rejoinder to my address, I was thrown off my guard for an instant, and probably betrayed my astonishment. 'Have you any tobacco?' he repeated, sternly. I replied that I had none. 'Not even a little?' he pursued. 'No!' 'Then I must soon perish,' he said, bowing his head again upon his bosom. 'I have asked everybody, for a long way back, and have got none yet; I can't go much longer without.' 'Don't you know that tobacco is vile stuff, and is the only thing that will poison a crocodile?' 'It cures me of all ills,' he returned, meekly. I glanced about to devise some expedient for his succor, and, perceiving we were nearest to the house of Father Shaw by the back road, I bade him follow me, and I would show him where he could get something better than tobacco. He followed me listlessly, and I soon brought him within Miss Leah's comfortable kitchen, which was savory with the pleasant odors of a good, substantial winter supper. Miss Leah was consider-

ably surprised at first, and demurred somewhat about receiving such an object ; but I stated the case so piteously, that the natural kindness of her heart became enlisted, and I knew I had brought my protégé to safe quarters. Father Shaw came in, and began to investigate matters at once. 'What on airth do ye wear such a bad-looking apron as that for?' he asked. 'It's my phylactery, and it keeps off the evil eye,' replied the man, solemnly. 'Your what? I should think 'twas your factory where yer'd manufactured all the dragons and devils that is telled on in Revelations. And is that are the mother of abominations, in the middle of all them things?'

" 'Speak low,' said the poor man ; 'that is my lady-love, and I've made a vow to wear her on my heart till the resurrection, when God shall come with a writ of habeas corpus and bring us all to judgment.' However this may seem in the relation, he wore such an an air of dejection, and spoke so sadly, the tears came to my eyes, despite myself, and I exclaimed inwardly, 'Who has made us to differ?'

" 'Been crossed in love, I guess,' said Father Shaw to me. 'Yes, yes,' responded the hapless stranger ; ' 'twas all a cross. She was cross, her father was cross, and it came across me without even a cross-bill, till I crossed over the legal bonds, and have wandered up and down cross-roads ever since, cross-questioned and cross-examined by all I meet.' 'Thankful am I,' said Miss Leah, 'that I was never in love ;' and she bestirred herself about the table in a manner that indicated a thirst for justice from some quarter. A cup of warm tea and some food revived the poor creature consid-

erably. 'There!' said he, at length, raising the teaspoon by way of emphasis, 'you all conclude — that is, you come to the conclusion according to the statutes — that I was always just what I am now. But no! Great God! thou knowest what I was, what I am, what I shall be! I know, too, that I was once a man; now I am a fool; some day I shall be an angel or devil, I can't say legally which.' He then commenced singing a love-song, in a tone more suggestive of melancholy than the most plaintive dirge. I could not endure it, and I left him with Father Shaw, who said he would take care of him that night, and give him a warm coat in the morning, with some stout boots."

During this recital Mr. Solomon had paid profound attention, and several times had started in his chair, as if about to interrogate Mr. Wellmont. He now arose to his feet, and, in a tone of suppressed anxiety, said,

"Did that man give you his name?"

"No," replied Mr. Wellmont, "I did not inquire. Father Shaw might have learned, however."

"Well, sir, I know who it was. The description tallies exactly. The apron — the language — the eye — all belong to no one else. It was my uncle!"

"Is it possible?" said Mr. Wellmont.

"Yes; and, merciful Heavens! what a sinner I am to have closed my eyes upon him all this time! I have despised and made merry about him, when I have thought of him hitherto. I have called him impatiently a poor wretch, because he made himself such a victim to a woman. Now, I am brought to

know something of his trial myself. Can you believe, Mr. Wellmont," he continued, "that that object of charity and compassion was once a capable, intelligent, and highly-respected citizen of the city of H——, doing a good business as a young lawyer, and giving promise of becoming one of the first men in the state? My grandfather had but two sons. The eldest was my father, who settled as a merchant in a country village; but upon his death, which occurred shortly after that of my mother, I was placed in charge of my maternal uncle, Deacon Goodwin, of this place. My uncle Frederic was liberally educated, and progressed rapidly in his career, until an engagement existing between him and a daughter of one of the first families in the city of his residence was broken, the reason of which I never clearly learned. My uncle took the affair heavily to heart, and gradually fell off from his business, until he became deranged. He was taken to the hospital for the insane, but, escaping several times, he was at length put in charge of a family connection, and I suppose he is allowed to wander about as he wills, to save trouble and expense; for the bank in which most of his property was invested failed, a few years since. I am sorry to say I have neglected looking into the matter, and I fear he has suffered from my unkind omission."

"You have thus been brought most providentially to see your duty," said Mr. Wellmont, "and I trust it will not be in vain. God has afflicted you that you might have pity for the afflictions of others; and, instead of rebelliously giving yourself to a fate like that of your uncle, I trust you will

try to elevate not only yourself, but others, and so merit the richest blessings Heaven ever bestowed upon mortals."

"Yes!" said Mr. Solomon, reflectively; "one fool in the family is enough, without another of the same sort. I will try to do what I can for myself and him. I know one thing — I shall always feel more comfortable in the thought that it is I who am the injured. If I had encouraged her to think I loved her, and then, after winning her affections, had left her to bear her disappointment alone, I should think torment was too good for me; for it is a thousand times worse for a man to treat a poor, defenceless, delicate woman ill, than for a woman to turn against a man. The weaker sex have n't so much self-reliance, I suppose, as we have."

It was now Mr. Wellmont's turn to pale and flush with secret emotion. These words, unwittingly spoken, touched a chord of his heart that vibrated with a keen remorse. He knew, though others did not, that he had taught Edith to think he loved her; he had loved her in truth, he loved her still; and yet upon the writing-desk before him was a letter just written to another, in which he had asked to have the time of his marriage appointed. He had made a great sacrifice; but the question could not be waived — "Had God required that sacrifice, or had his own pride, and the pride of the world in which he moved?"

## CHAPTER X.

### DISAPPOINTMENT.

HORACE RAYMOND was one of those instructors who have the tact of infusing a vital, expanding interest among their pupils. Under his tuition and training, the dullest gradually awoke into new light, and those who were predisposed to be ambitious became eager and untiring aspirants for excellence. He was like a successful general, who, by a few magnetic words, arouses his soldiers to do and to dare to the utmost limits. He excelled, because he was a master; he succeeded, because he made no rules which applied indiscriminately to all. His principle was that no two pupils must be subjected to precisely the same treatment, for the simple reason that no two minds are organized upon the same scale, or endowed with the same capabilities, and, therefore, must not be supposed able to receive and give ideas in the same ratio. Even in the case of some who did not equal their class-mates by reason of negligence, he made secret allowance for the natural temperament, which, perhaps, was sluggish or weak, and, consequently, unable to accomplish that amount of labor which could be performed by another of more active and

and powerful faculties. But none were left to their own errors. His grand watchword, Industry, must be responded to by every pupil. He believed and taught that patient labor would accomplish the most surprising results. The words of Sallust, that "Men want industry more than time or abilities," he often repeated to his pupils.

A new world of hope and effort was thus opened to Mary Pickering, who had so long been neglected, and taught to believe herself inferior. Her previous education having been almost entirely derived from solitary reading, her first efforts which required action upon her independent judgment were crude and discouraging. With every hindrance she was ready to believe that all the assertions of her ignorance and incapacity were truths; and, perhaps, would have faltered and stopped by the way, had it not been for the influence of her teacher.

"Never be disheartened at failures," said he; "for it is our failures that at last bring us above mediocrity. They stand out along our way as statued contrasts to our successes. No man who has attained a degree of perfection, in whatever art, can look back upon his course, and not discover that his errors, by the very mortification and patience and hard discipline they summoned to their correction, served the most effectually to advance him toward the grand result. Little can we see from the single germ what shall be the product! Who would have once predicted from the wild brier all the beautiful varieties of the rose; from the common almond-tree, the delicious peaches and nectarines; from the black thorn,



the royal products of the plum ; from the crabs and wildings, the staple luxury of apples of every flavor ? Who that now beholds upon the walls of a library in Sienna some straight, stiff, Gothic figures in fresco, which are the earliest works of Raphael, is not impressed with man's capacity for improvement, when he contrasts these with the artist's glorious masterpieces of St. John in the Desert, the Madonna della Sedia, the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, or the Transfiguration !”

These words were not without their effect. They fell upon the minds of his pupils with a power which was wholly irresistible.

During the few months of his residence among them, he produced a thorough revolution ; but in none was this more evident than in the mind of Mary Pickering. Edith was faithful in her assistance, and Mary constant in her efforts, and she gradually progressed at a rate which astonished even herself. The amount of knowledge she had acquired from reading, by a course of systematic discipline soon came into exercise, and assisted her so largely, that she was enabled to overtake and outstrip many who commenced seemingly in her advance.

At the close of the term, a day was devoted to the public exhibition of the exercises of the academy ; and a day of unusual interest it was to the people of Waterbury, and to representatives of many places and schools in the vicinity. Several members of the clergy were present, especially invited by Mr. Wellmont, who from the first had interested himself in the school, and upon his first acquaintance had been friendly to

Mr. Raymond. Indeed, the intelligent teacher had won friends from almost every family in the place. Even Father Shaw, who was prone to look with suspicion upon young men who "set themselves up to teach others," especially if they came with such high recommendations as did Horace Raymond, came at last to like him; and Miss Leah was heard to say that she should think he would be a minister, for he had too much sense in his head to be anything less. In the afternoon the large hall was packed densely with curious spectators: for the business men of the village had been allured from their usual places; the young men came as a matter of course where so many interesting girls were assigned a part in the exercises; and a large class of ladies, not strictly interested in book matters, came because there was much to see, and it was fashionable to be there. This pleasant assemblage of parents and friends spoke favorably for the place, indicating that there was a great degree of coöperation with intellectual pursuits.

The exercises proceeded with increasing interest, notwithstanding, as is usual in such cases, several who had devised great things for themselves were chagrined at the calm but certain triumph of others whom they had previously regarded as their inferiors; for Mr. Raymond had unusual skill in assisting the diffident and unassuming to bring out the full extent of their resources. Julia Pickering and Mary furnish an instance in point. Julia possessed no depth of character, and had always been a superficial scholar, really knowing very little of what she professed to know; and in such an emergency as this came off but poorly, with only the

merit of reciting the words of the author, being at a total loss when questioned by the committee for examination. But Mary answered with a real appreciation of the subject, and betrayed a depth of reflection which attracted the attention of all. Several topics which Julia had failed to explain, or had treated in such a mistaken way as to excite compassion for her ignorance, had been given to Mary, who replied intelligently and fully, quite unconscious, apparently, of the admiration she thus gained.

Even to the very few who most loved her, it seemed she had never looked before as on this occasion; and to those who regarded her with dislike her new appearance was a marvel. Her dark eyes were beaming with pleasurable emotion; her clear, olive complexion was deepened into rare beauty; and her finely-shaped head was bound with shining, heavy masses of her brown hair, without ornament. Her figure was erect, slender, and graceful, and there was a charm about her manner so naïve and appealing to affection, as if almost doubtful of her claim, that was much more winning than the most piquant, assured airs of her sister. She was attired with great simplicity, even homeliness; but it made no difference — no one cared to look at her dress.

In the most advanced classes, and especially in the languages, Edith bore the palm of excellence from many who were older and of far higher pretensions than herself. Her own classes who had received her instruction gave her much credit. The pallor of her face contrasted strikingly with her mourning dress; but how sweet, though sad, was her voice! —

the voice never heard by Mr. Wellmont without reminding him of loveliness and of heaven! Thenceforth it was to him as a threnody for something lost. Her beauty, always undisputed, was on this occasion heightened by her sadness and statuesque tranquillity; and, when excitement had summoned blushes to her cheek, it rivalled a snow-wreath in the glow of sunset.

Among the latest of the exercises was a composition by Edith, which was pronounced, by the best judges present, as a rare and most creditable effort for a school-girl of her years. Its sensible logic, correct English, and beauty of imagery, could not fail of winning praise, and its pathos touched many hearts to tears. Its theme was the somewhat peculiar one of "*Cotton.*" And, no sooner had she commenced the first sentence thus, "We find our word cotton was originally derived from Khoten, a province of Kashgar, in Asia," than she absorbed the undivided interest of the audience, which was never suspended till the end. Such a fearless, though indirect allusion to her former employment, exhibiting the deep independence of her character, and her capacity to defend the idea of inferior labor, disarmed criticism at once, and for a time, at least, allayed the envy excited by the distinctions she had won for herself. She did not treat the topic simply historically, but it was adorned with the most refined and excursive allusions with which the fabric is ever associated; from the gossamer-like muslin which floats around the ærial figure of the ball-room, or the person of the youthful bride, to the plain robe that shrouds the inanimate forms of those whom we fol-

low with mourning to the grave. Among the most conspicuous of the concluding addresses was that of Mr. Wellmont, in which he employed a fine sentence from Edith's theme, to bring out a sentiment of his own; and this laudatory mention decided the popularity of her effort.

The last exercise was the general singing of a parting hymn, written by Edith. This was the ostensible parting; but the real separation was another thing. The pupils, without exception, esteemed their teacher as his superior merits deserved; and they would have been inconsolable had he not promised to return at the expiration of a few weeks' vacation.

Julia Pickering had used every effort and blandishment to win his especial regard, and she believed that he would at least ask a correspondence with her during his absence. But, though he had uniformly treated her with the most perfect politeness, he gave no sign of what her heart so earnestly craved. He would have remained a day or two longer after the close of his school, to meet several pleasant appointments with his pupils, had he not been suddenly summoned away by a message from home, announcing that his father was dangerously ill. And so, amid the haste of his departure, Julia was left a victim of hope deferred. But Mary, whose shrinking heart had kept her by herself when he made his adieus to the family, had been especially summoned to his presence, and distinguished by a confidential communication.

When he had gone Julia yielded to a passionate outburst of tears, and, enraged with disappointment and mortification, commanded Mary to retire with her to her own room. She

then ordered her to disclose what Mr. Raymond had said to her in the moment of his parting. Mary had formerly submitted to her sisters, whatever restrictions they might impose on her; but of late her character had acquired new strength, and the idea that she had some right of her own had begun to dawn upon her mind. She therefore replied, trembling with the weight of the new responsibility she was assuming,

"If you had asked me in kindness, Julia, I would have told you; as it is, I refuse to do so."

"Refuse!" repeated Julia, as if unable to comprehend the meaning of that word from one whom she had treated as an inferior.

"I do," replied Mary, firmly, but calmly.

The chagrin attending Mr. Raymond's departure had proved sufficient to transform Julia into an impersonation of anger; but this new rebuff heightened her passion, so that she was scarcely conscious of her own words. Having always been a prime favorite with her mother, she had no idea of thus being baffled, and by a sister who had been educated to cower before her. A long hour she consumed in harsh invective and command, to effect her purpose. At last Mary became so agitated that she entreated her sister to desist. Her sensitive heart was sinking beneath the accumulated abuse; for, all unused as she was to self-defence, she had no protection for herself. An appeal to her other sisters, or her mother, she knew would be useless; and she had little or no access to her father. The appearance of Julia terrified and

overwhelmed her ; and, falling upon her knees before her, she cried,

“O, Julia ! spare me ! spare me ! Let me go from you !”

“Never,” said Julia, clenching more strongly the doorway, “until you tell me what I require.”

Mary looked up, and saw her eyes flashing with anger, her lips compressed with determination, and she felt that further appeal was hopeless. Yet she was firm in her own refusal to yield up that one precious secret to such unwarranted extortion. A nature like hers could not long endure such a struggle. A quick, sharp pain smote her heart, communicating at once with her excited brain. She tried to weep, but all command of herself was gone ; and her last recollections were of the unkind words of Julia, bringing new misery and darkness with every moment.

When Mary returned to consciousness, she found herself in her own room, with the housemaid waiting at her bedside. The shadows of evening had stolen in unawares ; and, to her bewildered senses, the whole apartment was dense with gloom. But her heart, also darkened, was illumed with a single ray of hope, as of pure, white light, associated with the last words of Horace Raymond. Through all the weary, wakeful hours of that night, in spite of the wretchedness occasioned by the repeated recurrence of the injuries she had received, those words were uppermost in her mind.

In the morning she was decidedly ill ; but no one of the family came to inquire for her. Late into the hours of the day she was aroused by the presence of her father, who was

so alarmed at her appearance, that he despatched a summons for Dr. Humphrey without delay. With the physician came Mrs. Pickering, who was very profuse in her attentions to him, and to please him gave some little notice to Mary. Mr. Pickering was reassured, by the opinion of Dr. Humphrey, that Mary had nothing more than a slight illness, occasioned by over-exertion, which might be cured by sufficient rest and freedom from excitement. Leaving a light sedative medicine, and some of his characteristic encouraging words, which were in most cases more potent than drugs, he went away. Mrs. Pickering lingered long enough to censure Mary severely for what she termed her feigning sickness to attract attention, adding that she had been made quite too much of recently; but she could not deceive her, as she did her father.

This was one more pang to Mary; for, to be thought a deceiver, in addition to her real ills, was worse than the pain of sickness. Left to the solitude of her own thoughts, she rapidly grew worse, her fever increased, and her mind began to picture to itself numberless unreal impressions. Hour after hour she lay suffering for a draught of water, or the most trifling attentions. Once, on hearing the housemaid pass her door, she called and attracted her notice; but, in reply to her wishes, she was told that peremptory orders had been given to let her wait upon herself. With tears she reiterated her supplications in vain, and finally asked to have Edith sent for to her assistance. This Gillis promised to do.

Mary was revived at the prospect of seeing her friend; and she soon was entirely absorbed in the pleasant anticipation,



even counting the minutes which must elapse in the mean while.

After considerable delay, just as Mary was fully expecting to meet the dear face which always smiled upon her, Gillis returned alone, saying that she had been ordered not to let any one go to her room.

This disappointment completed the work already begun. In the evening, when her father returned with Edith (who had hastened to her at the first moment she had heard of her ailing), the consolation came too late. Mary was delirious with a high fever, and had no correct knowledge of anything about her. In vain did Edith, by every manifestation of affection, implore her to recognize her; in vain were her father's kind words and tears.

The only answer was, "Edith can't come, and I have no water to drink! Just one cup! O, no! She will never come to me!"

Dr. Humphrey, when again called, shook his head sadly, and said he had not properly estimated her case, — or, as was most probable, a great change had transpired during the day, — and regretted he had not been summoned sooner.

It resulted in a protracted and dangerous illness, during all which time Edith was unremitting in her attentions — an angel of gentleness and care. Meanwhile Mrs. Pickering kept within her own room, upon the plea of nervous indisposition. The sisters, who belonged to that class who have a fear of nothing so much as of sickness and death, would not have entered Mary's apartment upon any consider-

ation, lest it might have resulted in some kind of injury to themselves; and, beside, Julia had especial reasons of her own for not appearing there, for the true secret of her sister's illness was known only to the sufferer and herself. Mary had raved piteously about that fearful scene with Julia, but no one imagined she was speaking truth.

The crisis of her illness was watched by Dr. Humphrey, her father, and Edith; and when at last a word of hope was whispered by the kind-hearted physician, amid his tears, Edith was almost overcome with the excess of her emotion, and prayed fervently to Heaven that Mary might yet live in the light of happier days.

Mary returned to the consciousness of life like a frail plant trampled to the earth, bearing the likeness of death, but revived a little by the cooling breath of a shower. Her spiritual nature was dominant over the earthly to such a degree that her senses seemed refined to the most perfect sensitiveness; and had it not been for the affectionate attendance of her friend, the delicate chords of her being, long rudely stretched by unloving hands, would have been broken forever. The doctor entertained fears at this time of the derangement of her mind, and so had cautioned the family against every species of action in her presence that might occasion excitement.

Mary had begun to acquire strength a little more rapidly, when Edith was obliged to leave her for a day, to attend an examination of candidates for teachers, in a neighboring town, where she had succeeded in engaging a school for

the ensuing season, by the recommendation of Mr. Wellmont. She would willingly have deferred the engagement, but, as this could not be, she carefully introduced the subject to Mary, and inquired which of her sisters she should ask to take her place during her absence. The invalid was pained at the prospect, for her dread of her family was unconquerable; but, concealing her feelings, she entered into the spirit of Edith's arrangements with as much heart as she was able. None of her sisters, however, were found willing to undertake the service, and Gillis was assigned to the place.

But when the morrow came, and Gillis had left Mary for a few minutes, to attend to some of her household duties, Julia entered the room of her sister, and, entirely contrary to her usual manner, condescended to be quite gracious, and even inquired if there were not some assistance she could render her. Mary was startled at her appearance there, scarcely knowing what reply to make. She was about to murmur her acknowledgments, when Julia approached her bed, and, producing something which she held up within her hands, said,-

"Guess, Moll, what I've got here!"

"I can't tell," replied Mary, faintly smiling.

"It is a letter," said Julia, her eyes sparkling.

Mary instantly thought to herself that it must be a letter to her from Horace Raymond, — that expected letter upon which her imagination had so much dwelt, — and that Julia, regretting her late unkindness, had brought it in person.

"Look there," continued Julia, holding the envelope so

that she might see only the word "Waterbury" upon the outside; "can you tell that writing?"

Mary knew it well — knew it in an instant; for no one ever wrote like Horace Raymond.

"O, yes," she replied, extending her hands eagerly. "Do give it to me quickly!"

Julia drew backward, retaining the letter, and glancing silently at Mary, who was trembling with excess of joyful emotion.

"Are you certain it is for you?" she at length inquired.

"Yes; he told me he would write, and I expected a letter long before," replied Mary, with great simplicity.

"Ah! that indeed!" pursued Julia, in her wonted tone, which caused Mary to start with her old fear, and look upon her bewilderingly. "So you can tell me now without drivelling upon your knees for an excuse!"

"O! Julia, how can you tantalize me so?" cried Mary, turning very pale.

"Well, look once again!" and she now displayed the entire face of the envelope. "Does that read like your name, or mine?"

When Mary discovered that the letter was addressed to Julia, she only faltered, brokenly, "Was there no letter for me?" and, receiving a triumphant "No" in reply, clasped her hands over her face to conceal her emotion, and lay perfectly motionless. Julia expected to see her weep and moan, but she awaited the sounds of grief in vain.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EXAMINATION BEFORE THE SCHOOL-COMMITTEE.

THERE are few positions so trying to a young girl entering the world upon her individual responsibility as that of appearing before a select committee for examination as to her qualifications for a school-teacher. That our free schools should be zealously guarded from being committed to unworthy and incapable instructors, is certain; but that such guardianship is frequently exercised under the influence of prejudice, false notions of requirements, and a desire to exhibit superiority in contrast to helplessness, is equally certain. For how frequently, at the present day, are applicants for schools tortured and rejected, because they fail to answer some foolish quibble, or describe a course of travel as ambiguous as a selenographic chart, and which would do credit to a Humboldt or Sir John Franklin, when, perhaps, they possess many of the best requisites for the vocation, — serenity of temper, clear judgment, and grace of manners; while some flippant, conceited candidate for teaching, without experience or knowledge of human nature derived from books or observation, but who can glibly answer said quibble, and

accomplish the given task, obtains preference for the training of young minds, for whom systematic habits of thought are of infinitely greater importance than the minutiae of text-books which are changed every few years.

In such a situation the most self-assured are baffled, and the naturally diffident and distrustful receive a shock more powerful than that from any galvanic battery. A timid, trembling applicant for a certificate, before a body of several ministers, who will be as astute, powerful, and formidable, as is possible, reminds one of the accounts of human sacrifices in the Egyptian temple of Isis.

The place at which Edith met this ordeal was at Birhampton, a town adjacent to Waterbury, at the house of the Rev. Mr. Swinton, whom the reader has already met in the study of Mr. Wellmont. But Mr. Swinton was not the chairman of the committee. The important personage who conducted affairs was the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree, the pastor of the most powerful society of the place, and apparently at home in his position. He was a lofty, cold, unimpressible man, who stood in the world like a grave-stone, in memory of death and of his own name. He had a great reputation, — that most convenient antecedent to all independence, — and so could well afford to stand aloof upon the pedestal of his dignity. It was known that the family of Crabtree to which he belonged had produced numerous ministers upon the direct stalk, or collateral branches; that he, the Rev. Hyliscus, had received his education, which was reputed to be immense, at

two colleges, in a law-office, in the study of an eminent divine, and in a theological institution.

Pope, in his Moral Essays, when enumerating the different callings of the sons of a family, says :

“ Will sneaks a scrivener, an exceeding knave ;  
Is he a churchman ? — then he ’s fond of power.”

Whatever might have been the characteristics of the other twigs of Crabtree, it is undeniable that a fondness for power distinguished this one. His power over the community in which he lived was of that nature that he could have propounded any rule in religious and practical life to his people without dispute ; could act and think for them without gain-saying, and had become almost an embodiment of their religion.

The third member of the committee was Rev. Mr. Pinney, a small man, with a small voice, and representing a small society. The remaining member was a layman, who was one of those men especially esteemed by ministers, and who consequently attained to his office through their influence.

There was also in Mr. Swinton’s parlor a lady, who sat aside, by a window, engaged in some fancy-work. At the entrance of Edith, notwithstanding her embarrassment, her attention had been arrested by this lady’s cool scrutiny of herself, and by the peculiar expression of her countenance that followed, which Edith felt was not only pointed with curiosity, but disdain. She was attired with great elegance, and was evidently disposed to rate everybody by her own standard. When the committee had all assembled,

this lady observed to Mr. Swinton, with a peculiar smile, that she would retire from the room, if necessary ; for which he declared there was no necessity, and, turning to the clergymen, said : " This lady is from a city ; and I should like to have her witness some of our proceedings here in the country, if there are no objections." \*

" Certainly, madam ; we should like to have you remain," said Mr. Crabtree.

Edith having arrived earlier in the day than the other applicants, she was first summoned before the committee. It was their custom to devote a day to the examinations, so that each person might appear separately ; and they were now fresh for the work. She was first requested to read a page from a History of Missions, on which were a variety of difficult names of persons and foreign stations, selected by Mr. Crabtree. Edith was a very fine reader, usually ; her voice was adapted to clear and distinct expression ; and her sensitive appreciation of the subject, combined with a certain natural taste, enabled her more than creditably to interpret the author. But, having, on this occasion, to read, as it were, for a given amount of approbation, in presence of such critical listeners, she lost her self-possession, at first, and read in manner quite unworthy of herself. But Mr. Swinton sat smiling all the while, and each time she had struggled to the end of the sentence nodded encouragingly ; for it was quite in his vein to secure the good graces of every one, partly from a love of popularity, but more, perhaps, from a natural kindness of heart. But all this kindness



was lost upon Edith. She saw only the large, solemn figure of Mr. Crabtree, whose presence, to her mind, swallowed up all the others', as did the fat kine of Pharaoh's dream devour the lean.

She was next exercised in orthography, in which she made no mistakes.

"I shall now ask you some questions in primary instruction," said Mr. Crabtree. "Among the abbreviations are some of which I find many teachers ignorant, but which must be known and taught, to attain the true standard. We always find, in certain common legal instruments, a form like this: 'Middlesex, ss.,' or any other county, with that annexed abbreviation. Now, what does 'ss.' stand for?"

"For *solicit*, I believe," answered Edith.

"I know that is the vulgar error; but it is time it was more generally corrected," said Mr. Crabtree, glancing about upon the other members of the committee, who were looking scarcely less puzzled than Edith. "It stands for *scilicet*, a Latin word, —"

"Which signifies 'truly,' 'to wit,'" said Edith, who was very well versed in the rendering of Latin.

Mr. Crabtree frowned. He had not supposed that Edith knew anything of what he was about to say; and he did not like missing the *éclat* of his point. "It signifies 'You may be sure,'" he added, curtly.

Mr. Pinney, and Mr. Lee, the layman, looked, for all the world, as though the Latin word had no other intelligence for them than "slice it," or "silly set."

"Xmas?" pursued Mr. Crabtree. Edith could not tell; and she began to feel very much confused.

"It is an abbreviation of Christmas," said Mr. Crabtree.

"Xn?" Edith was at a loss again.

"Means Christian."

"I did not know as the word Christian was ever abbreviated," ventured Edith.

"Neither did I," said Mr. Swinton, smiling, "only in cases where the word is used to designate particular graces."

"It is upon the list of abbreviations in common use," said Mr. Crabtree; "and I might ask many more, which, I presume, you could not tell," he added.

Edith sat pale and trembling with fear, till she could see three Rev. Hyliscus Crabtrees, instead of one.

"We shall next examine your knowledge of geography," said the chairman; "and in this branch we are very particular, as we attach great importance to having our teachers thoroughly conversant with the location, statistical resources, and general knowledge of the places of the world, that the pupils committed to their instruction may be extensively and thoroughly trained in this point. Mr. Swinton, will you proceed to open the geographical questions?"

Edith now felt like the mariner who sees his ship between two enormous mountains of ice, each approaching nearer and nearer to his destruction. She was making a rapid effort to recall the boundaries of as many states as possible, when Mr. Swinton interrupted her thoughts by asking, "What place in the east is the most renowned for the

incomparable fragrance of the rose-water there manufactured ? ”

Edith blushed to the hue of the deepest blush-roses which ever came to distillation ; for she had not the slightest information on the question.

“ It is Nisiben, in Mesopotamia, I believe,” said Mr. Swinton, who, perceiving her embarrassment, wished to relieve it as quickly as possible.

“ Which State in the Union has the least compass of territory ? ” next inquired Mr. Pinney, of the small society. This being promptly answered, Mr. Crabtree looked to Mr. Lee for the next question, who said he thought of nothing at that moment to ask. He would have a question the next time.

“ Where is the Strait of Bab-el-Mandel, and from what is the name derived ? ” now asked Mr. Crabtree.

Edith stated the location promptly ; but the derivation she could not tell, and remarked that she should think that question was not embraced within the province of Geography.

Mr. Crabtree sat in severe silence for a moment, lost in contemplation of the idea of a young, ignorant girl presuming to criticize a question from a man like himself. “ If she had belonged to my people she would have been wiser,” he thought ; “ as it is, I will show her that the Rev. Hylisous Crabtree knows why he speaks.”

“ The derivation of names is among the most important branches of knowledge,” he said to Edith, elevating his eyes to the ceiling, and occasionally glancing down, as a condor, sitting upon the heights of the Andes, casts his eye

upon his prospective prey in the vale below. "If you are unable to instruct in this, you cannot instruct at all as you should. The name Bab-el-Mandel is from the Arabic for the 'Gate of Tears;' and was of old applied to the strait, from the belief that those who issued through it could never return."

The tears now came to Edith's eyes, as if in correspondence to Mr. Crabtree's "derivation;" but through them she saw, in a moment of misery, the lady who sat listening, striving to draw Mr. Swinton into a smile, in return for her derisive laugh. That look was long afterward remembered by its victim; for there are few trials more poignant to bear than the mirth of others at our woe.

"What are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Caucasian countries?" now inquired Mr. Swinton, in a manner which he intended to be very bland and familiar. Edith hesitated. "For instance, of Circassia? — of Schirvan?" he added. Edith, a little brightened, replied that Georgia and Circassia, provinces of Caucasus, were famous for the strength and symmetry of the frames of the inhabitants.

"Yes," said Mr. Swinton, dallying a little with his watch-key; "and you might have added, that the women of those countries are the most beautiful in the world. That is geographical. However, private opinion might differ," bowing to Edith and his lady friend, with especial animation. Mr. Crabtree now frowned again, and looked upon his associates with unmitigated reproof. Mr. Pinney laughed a very little

laugh ; and Mr. Lee did not know exactly what it was proper to do.

"Can you tell me anything of Schirvan, Miss Hale?" continued Mr. Swinton.

Of Schirvan Edith was wholly oblivious, having only, in connection with the derivation of names, an unpleasant association with an obnoxious disease.

"This region," said Mr. Swinton, "from the abundance of its beautiful flowers, is called the Paradise of Roses. Here is also the temple of fire, and the fountains of white naphtha and black naphtha ; which latter supplies many countries with a certain substance called— lamp oil."

This last was spoken carefully by Mr. Swinton, as if in fear of soiling his tongue.

"And Sovropol, the capital of another province of Caucasus," continued Mr. Crabtree, "is the location of a Scottish missionary station."

Mr. Swinton bowed assent ; but it was doubtful if he had treasured so deep a memory of the missionary station, as of the roses and feminine loveliness.

"Which is the longest river in the world?" inquired Mr. Pinney, opening his eyes with the evident determination to be something, after all, and extending his dapper limbs to their utmost capacity. This being answered, Mr. Lee ventured to inquire, in deference to the clergy present, "How many houses of public worship are there in London?"

"That question," said Mr. Crabtree, "is good for some oc-

casions; but it is hardly explicit enough for this. Will you proceed to supply its place by another?"

"What people of the world have a practice, when they are dying, of taking hold of a cow's tail?"

Mr. Swinton now laughed outright, and Mr. Crabtree looked upon his layman in consternation. As Edith could not tell, Mr. Lee said it was the Brahmins, who believed that by so doing the cow would assist them to cross the river of fire, which lies, according to them, between this world and the other. He considered it a very important question, and he regretted that it could not be answered.

He had been reading a work on the heathen of India, and he had been astonished beyond measure at the revelations therein made.

"Speaking of that," said Mr. Swinton, "reminds me of a foolish thing, too good to be kept in this connection. A little girl, the daughter of one of my relatives from the city, once on a visit here, went to ride with me, and, in her surprise at the novelty of the horse so near her, asked, 'Will the cow's tail bite me?' I think I should be inclined to put a similar query, were I in the condition of the Brahmina."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Mr. Crabtree, and proceeded to ask another derivation at once; to restore the atmosphere to a suitable frigidity, after so much nonsense.

"From what does the palace of the Tuilleries derive its name?" As Edith made no attempt to answer, after a long pause, he said, "From *tuile*, a tile; because the spot on which it is erected was once used for the manufacture of tiles."

Mr. Crabtree saw that Edith was thoroughly discomposed ; but, remembering her objection to his first derivation, he was determined not to flinch ; for his temperament required seven-fold restitution for offence.

“ What two bays are at the eastern extremity of the African coast, and from what do they derive their name ? ” he continued. “ Can’t tell ? A simple question ! They are the two Syrtes, so famous in classical history ; and their name comes from the frequent dragging, or shifting, of their channel.”

“ Were you in despair of heart,” said Mr. Swinton, “ and wished to banish yourself from the scene of your sorrows, to the Sahara Desert, — or, as it is sometimes called, the Sahara Bela-ma (the sea without water), — what direction would you take ? and at what points would you touch in your progress ? ”

With considerable hesitation, Edith proceeded to reply as intelligibly as she could ; and, by Mr. Swinton’s assistance, was conducted at last, after a variety of stops, to the goal of her sorrows.

“ What is the kebla, or praying-point of the Mahometans ? ” inquired Mr. Pinney.

“ Toward Mecca,” said Edith ; “ and may I inquire,” she continued, with a sudden revival of all her energies, while her dark eyes flashed her indignation through her tears, looking alternately from Mr. Crabtree to Mr. Pinney, “ if your praying-point, before meeting here to examine a poor girl for her qualification for the means of obtaining a livelihood, who carries an honorable certificate of preparation from several

learned persons, was in the direction of that Being who has said, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy'?"

At this, Mr. Pinney was overpowered, and retired within his shell of dignity, like a little tortoise with a live coal upon its back. Mr. Swinton nodded in triumph to his lady friend. But Mr. Crabtree grew very red in the face, and seemed, for the first time in his life, at a loss to know how to proceed; for, from his knowledge of woman, he thought he had already said enough to put Edith in her place.

"Now," said Mr. Swinton, in a brisk manner, as though a sudden wind had sprung up, "we will proceed briefly to examine you in arithmetic. Meanwhile, Mr. Lee ventured to whisper to Mr. Crabtree that one so irreverent as that girl ought to be banished from the room. "Wait," replied Mr. Crabtree, emphatically.

The questions, now chiefly conducted by Mr. Swinton, were all answered promptly and correctly; for Edith had laid aside a portion of her terror after reaching the ultimatum of human patience. She was answering thus spiritedly, when Mr. Crabtree interrupted with, "From what is the word *carat* derived?"

Edith replied, with unabated promptness, she did not know.

Mr. Crabtree felt quite above explanation this time, when Mr. Swinton remarked, "You will oblige us by giving the derivation, Mr. Crabtree; for I presume no one present knows but yourself."



"It comes from *kuara*, a kind of bean, by which gold powder was originally weighed in the East," vouchsafed Mr. Crabtree, icily.

"It would be of great service to me, sir," said Edith, "if you would tell me who first invented arithmetic."

"I came here to *ask* questions, not to *answer* them," said Mr. Crabtree, growing redder.

"I believe I have read somewhere," said Mr. Swinton, "that arithmetic first attained any degree of perfection among the Greeks; but to what particular person the science of numbers owes its origin, I am unable to tell."

She was then examined in grammar, principally by Mr. Crabtree, who, notwithstanding her superior knowledge of that branch, succeeded in puzzling her till she could be puzzled no further. Mr. Swinton looked at his watch, and said the time allowed for the examination had passed.

"I shall ask one question more," said Mr. Crabtree, who seemed unwilling to lose the latest opportunity for the display of his knowledge: "Who first invented the alphabet?"

Edith cast a look of appeal to Mr. Swinton; her last hope was slipping away from beneath her grasp.

"It is necessary a teacher should know this, as well as the other questions we have asked," said Mr. Crabtree, "in order that pupils may be taught something more than what is found in school-books. It is of vast importance that a child, before learning its letters, should be told that the alphabet was —"

"I now recollect," spoke Edith, with a sudden dawn of

intelligence upon the subject, "that Cadmus is said to have first introduced letters into Greece."

"Plato lays down," continued Mr. Crabtree, at the same time letting his hand fall upon the table, emphatically, "that the alphabet was invented by Thoth, secretary to the Egyptian king, Thamus; and I regard such authority as indisputable."

"Indeed!" interposed Mr. Swinton, with a very bland smile; "I must now beg leave to differ from you, Mr. Crabtree, or Plato. This young lady is correct, I think. The other day, alighting upon the fact, that, in the language of the Indians, a rose is signified by the word *ertel*, I went on to think of the origin of letters, by a natural association of ideas. Upon referring to ancient and honorable authority, I found that the alphabetical characters were brought out of Phœnicia, by Cadmus, in the time of the judges of Israel. They then numbered only sixteen letters. Two hundred and fifty years after this, four letters more were added by Palamedes, in the time of the siege of Troy; though some give out that Epicharmus invented two of these letters. After the siege of Troy, — six hundred and fifty years, if I remember correctly, — Simonides invented the other four letters. If I am tedious," he added, "I beg pardon. But I wished to communicate what little I knew upon the point at issue, although I must say that I consider it of less consequence that a little abecedarian should know this, than the letters themselves, with the answers to such questions as, 'What town do you live in?' and 'How many senses have you?'"

"It is to be hoped they will not have the sense called *nonsense*," said Mr. Crabtree, to Mr. Swinton, in a low aside, intended for a reproof.

"Yes, yes," softly rejoined Mr. Swinton, in excellent humor; "but there is one other sense, which persons who have studied a long life sometimes lack, although it is considered very *common*."

"You may now leave this room until you are recalled to hear our decision respecting your qualifications," said Mr. Crabtree, in a loud tone, to Edith.

This deliberation continued an unusual length of time, during which Edith was a victim of anxiety and dread. "If I am rejected as not qualified, it will be such a mortification to have the fact come to the knowledge of my friends—to Mr. Wellmont, who recommended me!" she reflected. "And, then, it would be a great misfortune to lose the opportunity of teaching the school, which will leave me without prospect of the means of obtaining a livelihood."

As she had failed to answer so many of the questions asked her, she had strong fears of rejection; but Mr. Swinton's kind manner inspired her with a faint hope. One thought dwelt uppermost in her mind; it was that, whatever might be said in her disparagement by the committee in their deliberations, it would be in hearing of that lady who had looked upon her so derisively; and how could she enter her presence again, and, perhaps, hear her rejection announced before her! To some persons this would have been the last consideration, or a matter of perfect indifference; but Edith

was greatly, and unhappily, influenced in her presence, by some mysterious reason for which she could not account. As she sat in Mr. Swinton's back parlor alone, the image of the lady, with her cold, haughty eye, and the expressive curve of her lip, haunted her continually. "If Mr. Wellmont were only here, I should feel that I was protected," she said to herself.

At length Mr. Lee entered the room; her heart beat violently in agony, and with difficulty she followed him, as he said, in a hard tone, "You are requested to come now and hear the decision respecting you."

She returned to the parlor mechanically, and took her position beside a chair, just behind the lady.

"You may sit down," said Mr. Crabtree. But Edith did not move, being too rigidly preoccupied.

"We have considered your case," began Mr. Crabtree, in a terribly austere manner, "thoroughly, jointly, carefully; and the majority of this committee think —"

"Yes; the *majority*, and not all!" interrupted Mr. Swinton; while Edith was now so dizzied that she grasped the back of the chair against which she stood for support. —

"That you are *not* qualified to teach the school for which you have engaged yourself. You are young, and possibly, in time, you may become qualified to be a teacher. At present, we recommend you to attend school as a scholar."

Edith next heard a rustle of the lady's silk dress, as she turned in her chair to discover how the victim would bear the last infliction, and she heard something which was said hur-

riedly by Mr. Swinton, about his being in favor of somebody, or something ; but she was too confused to retain any distinct consciousness, save those words, "*you are not qualified!*" which echoed again and again to her ears. The committee then held a whispered consultation for a few minutes, in which Mr. Swinton was very active, while Edith, arousing herself to conceal her emotion, prepared to leave the room. "Wait a moment, if you please," said Mr. Swinton. And now her attention was newly arrested by a miniature which the lady just before her held within her hand, — held it carefully, admiringly, as though it possessed some talismanic potency. Was it possible that her sight deceived her? She brushed her eyes quickly with her cold fingers, and then leaned forward with breathless interest. Yes; she could not mistake; it was the picture of Mr. Wellmont! A new emotion replaced every other. But Mr. Swinton now came to conduct her out, and, when well beyond the hearing of the other members of the committee, expressed his disapprobation of the decision, and asserted he had made vigorous efforts to counteract and reverse it.

"I am certain," said he, "that many of the questions asked by Mr. Crabtree were extraordinary; indeed, I may call them excrescences; and I regard your failure to answer them as no test of your acquirements." Edith was too much troubled for words; the tears would come, despite her efforts to restrain her emotion. "If I can yet do anything for you," added Mr. Swinton, "I shall be most happy to exert myself in your behalf. And I shall tell Mr. Wellmont, the next time I see

him, that his recommendation has lost none of its truth in my estimation."

Edith murmured her thanks.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Swinton, as she was about to leave the door, "how I wish I could think of something to say which would comfort you! for I know just how you feel — like a beautiful rose that has been held to the olfactory organs of a snuff-taker, and then crushed rudely in fragments between his soiled fingers! Now I think of it, to divert your attention, I have a mind to disclose a pretty piece of news; it cannot fail to interest you, as you are one of Mr. Wellmont's friends, I see by his recommendation." And Mr. Swinton stepped a little nearer to Edith, as he said, in a low but animated voice, "This lady you saw in my parlor is engaged to marry Mr. Wellmont! So, you have been favored with the first sight of the future wife of your minister! No great loss without some small gain, you know!"

At these words, so harmlessly intended, yet so barbed with fresh pain to Edith, she turned very pale, but smiled to conceal her suffering, and even found strength to falter a hope that Mr. Wellmont and the parish might be blessed in his union; and then, once more expressing her gratitude to Mr. Swinton, left his presence.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ROMANCE AND REALITY.

EDITH found that, by reason of her long detention at her examination, she had missed the regular morning conveyance, by which she had designed returning to Waterbury, and she must now remain till evening, or walk a distance of five miles. She decided upon the latter alternative; for, in her present state of mind, the prospect of extreme fatigue was preferable to that of inactivity. The first mile of her walk was accomplished rapidly, under the pressure of the excitement attending her late disappointment. But this feeling gradually gave place to a severe consciousness of all that she had lost; and as she proceeded wearily upon her way, with her pale face bathed in tears, she exclaimed to herself, "It is true of me, as saith the Scripture, 'I will hedge up her way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths.' For some cause, perhaps for that curse which is promised to children's children, I am afflicted above measure;" for she now remembered the words of her mother, a short time previous to her death, concerning a shadow upon her father from his birth. Utterly exhausted, she sat down under the shadow

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of a tree, and abandoned herself to grief. Nature around her was serene and beautiful, clad in the spring verdure, but its quietude fell upon her heart as a solemn mockery. She was so much depressed and absorbed in her own bitter reflections, that she soon became unconscious of all surrounding objects.

In the midst of her gloom, a figure as of an angel arose upon her imagination, with a countenance radiant with hallowed hope. It was like her sainted mother! Then came into her memory, as though whispered by the invisible, "I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them." She thus remained a long time within the realm of a beautiful day-dream, when her attention was recalled by the sound of carriage-wheels in the distance, and she arose to go on.

A slight rustle behind her attracted her notice, so that she glanced round in the direction from which the noise proceeded. A huge snake was winding himself about the trunk of the tree against which she had but lately rested, and was evidently, from the repeated motions of his head by way of observations, making progress toward some object of prey. Startled almost beyond control, she stood breathlessly watching the monster, till she espied the object of his search, — a nest of young birds. And now the air was filled with the piercing cries of the mother-bird, who had returned, and was circling rapidly about the tree, while the birds from all directions came at her call, and united their screams, flying around the



head of Edith, as if imploring her to go to the rescue. The young birds, awakened to a sense of danger, were lifting their little heads towards their mother in the most pitiful manner; and when the snake had gained such a position as to thrust his venomous head from a branch above their nest, the cries of all the birds were so heart-rending, that Edith overcame her fear, and determined to impress the first available object near, to battle against the enemy.

The carriage had advanced without her notice, so greatly had she been absorbed by the scene; and she was first aware of its proximity by a voice making some inquiry respecting the serpent. Perceiving that it was a gentleman, she asked his assistance. He quickly alighted from his carriage, and, with a few vigorous blows of his whip, brought the snake to the ground, while the birds flew about him with the most joyful demonstrations. The creature, tenacious of life, sprang forward, and in the struggle with his captor wound over his hand, but another blow stretched him lifeless at his feet. The gentleman smiled as he made sure of his work, yet, without looking up, said to Edith, "I hope I shall not gain so unfavorable opinion as did Paul in Melita, when he threw the viper from his hand." Then, turning towards Edith, and, studying her countenance a moment, he said, "That ugly serpent has been instrumental, it seems, of introducing us, quite contrary to the customs of society. Will you accept of a ride towards Waterbury, or were you proceeding in the other direction?"

Edith replied that she was also going towards Waterbury;

and she accepted his offer, but not without considerable confusion.

Edith soon forgot her embarrassment in the presence of the stranger. She perceived that he was no ordinary person; for he was one of those men who are termed distinguished-looking, and no one could meet him without an impression of his superiority. He was neither young nor handsome, though not yet in what is termed middle age; his features were too prominent to be symmetrical, and his figure rather dignified than graceful. His complexion was of that olive cast which marks the Italians, yet devoid of its voluptuous and glowing softness; it was marked, instead, with that severity which indicates the influences of the rugged clime of the north. The mouth was rather wide, and eloquent with expression, betraying great firmness of purpose, and curling with a touch of satire. The Grecian chin, curved upwards, did not modify this indication of character. His eyes were dark, and deeply set beneath a heavy, almost fierce-looking brow, and so brilliant, yet steady in their light, they impressed with fear, rather than mildness. His person was tall and erect, and he was attired rather negligently, with a slight dash of eccentricity.

He inquired of Edith if she had any acquaintance in Birmingham. She replied that she had not; having only met the gentlemen composing the school-committee of that town, from which meeting she was now returning.

"Ah!" said he, with awakened interest, "you have then been arraigned upon an examination for a teacher? I thought

I perceived, at first, traces upon your countenance of a recent unpleasant encounter with something more formidable than a snake."

Edith could not continue the badinage; for the subject, bringing a recurrence of her troubles, impressed her too seriously. The stranger observed her look of pain, and, after a moment's silence, said, in a tone of kindness, "I am considerably interested in schools and all that pertains to them, although they are not in my line of business; and, having known something of the unpleasantness of such examinations, allow me to inquire if, in the result of your interview this morning, you have reason for regarding that committee as friendly to you."

"I have not," replied Edith, with decision; "save one of the gentlemen, whom I should mention as an exception."

"Not one of the clergymen, then, I presume?" he continued.

"Yes," said Edith; "I refer to the Rev. Mr. Swinton, of the Second Church; but he was unable to influence the others." She could not trust herself to say more.

The gentleman comprehended the cause of her distress, and, with sensitive consideration, he changed the topic of conversation to that of general literature. This embraced the new books of the season, upon which subject Edith was sufficiently well advised to speak with interest. Thus she soon became engaged in an animated conversation, and her observations upon several works were so apposite as to elicit his admiration and respect.

But when he spoke, outpouring some of the treasures of his own resources, seemingly inexhaustible, Edith was inspired with more than admiration — even awe! He was like one to whom all books are familiar; but his familiarity was not always friendship. To him a book was but a thing for his especial criticism, and no author was entirely faultless. His mind was adorned with these works which he had dissected with his satire, as it is related the apartment of one of the African kings is paved, and the walls and roof hung over, with the skulls of his own victims in war.

Pages of meaning, such as issue from ordinary minds, he expressed in a few words, original, lucid, and forcible. As Edith listened with rapt attention, she said, at last, by an effort overcoming her diffidence, "Excuse me, sir, but my opinion of you is not very unlike the Melitans of Paul, at present."

"How so?" he inquired.

"I refer to when the Scripture says, 'They changed their minds.'"

He smiled, and, looking admiringly upon her face, which was blooming a beautiful blush-rose, rejoined, "Thanks for your opinion; but do not, like the Melitans, remember me as a god — rather as a friend. Although I am a stranger, allow me to give you a little advice derived from experience in the trials of life. From the ashes of some plants a large proportion of the oxide of iron may be extracted; so from the ashes of your disappointed hopes, whatever they may be, derive the iron of resolution and persevering faith. Never be wholly

cast down, whatever misfortunes may come; for, as the Bible says, 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.' From your garb of mourning I infer that you have suffered before to-day; but let that suffering only fit you for nobler and truer duties. If you have met with opposition this morning, plume your wings for a higher flight than ever before; for, as you know, birds in flying require a wind that blows *against* them, and the more contrary the wind the higher can they rise.

'Like a ball that bounds

According to the force with which 't was thrown;

So, in affliction's violence, he that's wise,

The more he's cast down, will the higher rise.'

By thus mastering obstacles, you may at last reach the third heavens; for the great Giver of all things has promised the highest reward to those who overcome to the end."

They had now entered the village, and Edith expressed her gratitude less by words than her countenance, as the stranger assisted her to alight. "O, that I had courage to ask his name!" she said; but the words died away upon her lips, as she looked once more upon his dark, piercing eyes. The gentleman bowed benignly as he drove away, and left a memory of his countenance, in that latest moment, which was not soon forgotten.

"I know nothing of him, nor ever shall see him again," said Edith, sadly, to herself.

She found Dr. Humphrey in attendance upon Mary, who

had remained in a state of insensibility for some time after her unhappy interview with Julia. But the doctor had succeeded, at last, in partially restoring her to health; and with the introduction of old Mrs. Linn at her bedside, — who had ventured to leave her husband till Edith's return, — he felt more at ease about her. She was now lying asleep, and so very pale that Edith was startled, till Dr. Humphrey reassured her. Her hair was unbound, and fell all about the pillow just as Edith had so often seen it when Mary was troubled. "Poor, dear Mary! Would I had remained with you!" said Edith, carefully removing a heavy tress from her forehead.

"Nobody knows what that dear child has suffered," whispered Mrs. Linn. "I sometimes think it is strange that one in the family must suffer so much more than all the rest; but He who permits it knows what is best."

During the greater part of the succeeding night Edith sat awake by the bedside of Mary; but, falling into a light sleep about midnight, she was disturbed by a sound which seemed to proceed from the yard without. She arose hastily, and glanced from the window. The figure of a man was gliding along the lawn, and he stopped occasionally, as if expecting the appearance of some person.

She was just proceeding to alarm the household, supposing some marauder was waiting for the accomplice in his depredations, when she saw the figure spring forward and receive into his arms a female. A few minutes later, she heard the sound of carriage-wheels proceeding from the house, and the scene of romance by moonlight closed.

The next morning Celesta was missing from the breakfast-table, and, on going for her to her chamber, no trace of her remained, save a novel, open to a passage of selectest love, and turned down upon the pillow of her bed, and a note addressed to her father, announcing that she had fled to be wedded to him whom alone her heart could ever love. She had chosen that manner of leaving home in preference to any other; and, although such a step might cause him infinite surprise, she devoutly trusted that time and reason would overcome any unpleasantness which might result from her departure.

"Fudge!" said Mr. Pickering, on reading this; "she need not have troubled herself to get married in that manner. I never opposed her marrying the man, for I know nothing against him; but he is an object of pity, now, at any rate."

Mrs. Pickering professed to be inconsolable, and averred that for some time past she had been troubled with a presentiment of some remarkable event happening to the house. She was more than compensated for the loss, however, by the prospect of such an accession to the family as Mr. Raymond; for, since the receipt of her letter, Julia had given out that she was as good as engaged to him. To consummate her triumph, Mr. Pickering came home a few days later, with a letter, which he read aloud to his wife and Julia, in the greatest good humor.

It was from Horace Raymond, who, after announcing the death of his father, and the fact that he should be prevented from teaching the next term in Waterbury, in consequence

of assuming his father's business, asked Mr. Pickering for the hand of his daughter in marriage. "She must have inferred, by my last letter, which was direct and explicit, that such was my intention," it ran; "and, although etiquette may suggest that the acquaintance should be prolonged before marriage, the state of my affairs makes it at present difficult for me to leave home; and my affection, and the desire to perfect her education by introducing her to the superior advantages of the city, render it desirable that the union take place as soon as possible, if with your permission." The letter also stated that he should visit them within a short time, and would receive his answer in person.

"Nothing could better please me than to have Mr. Raymond in my family," said Mr. Pickering; "but it is a mystery to me, Julia, how you ever won him. I used to think, if he loved either of you, it was Mary, poor child! but his attention and kindness to her was because she was your sister, I suppose."

"Just think, papa, of that elegant man, with his splendid fortune, fancying such a girl as our Mary for a wife!" exclaimed Julia, with ineffable scorn.

"Well, I am little used to such affairs," rejoined her father, "and I suppose I might have known better if I had stopped to think. However, Mary is more of a girl than people generally give her credit for being. How well she appeared at the close of the academy!"

"She thinks quite too much of herself, since she commenced



attending that school," said Julia; "and I shall soon bring Horace to conduct himself towards her more becomingly."

And now Julia had acquired great accession of importance in the family, and even in the village; for the intelligence of her approaching marriage was rapidly circulated. All wondered at Mr. Raymond's choice; for one so artificial and devoid of solidity of character seemed unsuitable, even to the most unobserving, for such a thoroughly-educated and excellent man as he appeared.

"Things allers go by contraries in love matters," said Father Shaw, speaking of the contemplated marriage.

"But even the wisest men are such fools about marrying!" said Miss Leah; "they are sure to choose wives whose brains are no better than a cobweb, and who are so silly they ought to shame their husbands every time they open their mouths."

Every mantua-maker and seamstress was engaged for the preparation of the *trousseau*; and it was confidently whispered, by Julia's few intimate friends, that the most magnificent wedding that ever was witnessed in Waterbury would come off.

It was not to be expected that all this would escape the ears of the invalid Mary. Edith, divining the state of her friend's affections at this crisis, strove by every means to shield her from the knowledge; but a friend happening in to see Mary, by a single question concerning Julia's engagement disclosed the whole affair to her. But it came not upon her now as a crushing blow, for she had expected as much since

that hour when Julia had triumphantly shown her the letter addressed to herself. From the time of her subsequent recovery of her self-possession, she had striven to conquer the weakness of her heart, and school herself to greater endurance. This was the first secret she had withheld from Edith; — it was too sacred to be intrusted to any keeping, save that of Him who knoweth the hearts of all.

She brought herself now to speak with perfect tranquillity to Edith of the approaching marriage of her sister. Surprised at this new and beautiful revelation of character, Edith folded her to her heart more tenderly and closely than ever. From the trying experiences of her life she knew well how to sympathize with her friend; but she had prayed for strength to subdue the pangs of disappointment to silent and calm endurance, and her prayer had not returned unto her void.

“Yes, dear Edith,” said Mary, in reply to her inquiry, “I can feel that it is all right now as it is, though I cannot see clearly the mysterious purpose of our destiny. But I have come to feel that he who governs them is my best friend, and can do me no evil.

“Mr. Raymond was my first friend, after yourself, who met me upon a common ground of kindness and *love* — as I thought; but I was mistaken in that. As he was so superior to other men, I worshipped him. When my idol was taken from me, I was rebellious, for I had been trampled so long that I suppose I was more tenacious of my transient elevation. I was so ill, and weak-hearted, too, how could I bear

it all as I should have done? But, as I lay apparently insensible, and utterly powerless to act for myself, I was so awed and stricken at the idea of losing my mind entirely, that I vowed to God, if he would restore me to a full possession of my faculties, I would devote them all to him. He heard my prayer; and I now daily pray that I may be able to keep that vow. In the strength of this new grace, which has been given me from heaven, I feel that I can endure any sacrifice without repining. And, more than all, I can, for the first time, forgive all those who have trespassed against me. Even toward Julia, who has always shown the most unkindness to me, I can feel no enmity. And, dear Edith, I can say, as did the apostle, 'I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.'"

By all the love and faith of Edith's heart did she encourage Mary to persevere in the blessed work she had begun; and the good thus bestowed upon her was returned to her many fold. Other blessings were also bestowed upon Edith, as an encouragement for her resolution to persevere amid all her crosses and trials.

Within that week she received a letter from Mr. Swinton, stating that on the day following her examination he had been waited upon by a stranger, who had made minute inquiries respecting "the young lady who had been rejected by the school-committee." As several had been rejected, he was at length made to understand that Edith was the one to whom the gentleman referred, by his representing her as the one who

resided in Waterbury, and who wore mourning. The stranger said that he had it in his power to recommend a teacher to assist in a celebrated private school, and, if she was considered as qualified by him, he could direct her to a person who would engage her.

"And I am most happy to announce to you," continued Mr. Swinton, "that if you acquiesce in the proposal, you are engaged to teach for the ensuing term, for I spared no pains in your behalf. I endeavored to ascertain the name of the person who manifested such a generous interest for you, but this he refused, giving no account of himself, save that, as he was proceeding to the residence of a relative in these parts, he overtook you by the way, and conveyed you home. I congratulate you upon your excellent fortune, for the situation is every way greatly preferable to that which you lost. And that your way through all future time may be hedged with roses, is the prayer of your obedient servant,

"Z. R. L. SWINTON."

Edith found enclosed the directions by which she was to proceed, written by the stranger for Mr. Swinton. With gratitude and joy she lost no time in securing the situation.

On the following Sabbath, which was the last day before her departure, she entered the church in the morning, when but few people were assembled,—a custom especially dear to her from old associations,—and, collecting her thoughts for devotion, awaited the opening of the services. The organist was playing a favorite tune, time-worn, yet ever

beautiful and hallowed. The majestic music, with its alternate beauty and pathos, she likened to hoary mountains, whose heights, broken into fantastic forms, divide the clouds, and are clothed to their base with luxuriant grasses and arborescent ferns, interspersed with gigantic palms. Down from these solemn summits she saw angels, white-robed and glorious, descend with harmonious step, and, looking upward, fold their silver wings before their faces.

These imaginations were somewhat assisted by the impression of the surrounding world without. The tall old oaks, elms, and sycamores, bordering the mall of the village, some of the branches of which shaded the church-windows, in the strong breezes of the spring morning filled all the air with deep, recurrent sound; while the great pile of clouds, moving across the sky, were occasionally visible above and among the trees.

The sound of the bell overhead brought many memories of the blessed days when she had sat there between her beloved parents and marvelled about heaven and the angels. She was reminded, too, of that morning when their minister had first ascended those pulpit-steps, and her impression of his appearance; then of the sad changes that had come to her since.

While she thus mused, the congregation had assembled, and her attention was at length attracted by the appearance of Mr. Wellmont advancing up the aisle with a lady, whom he seated in the pew reserved for the minister's family. Immediately this lady became the cynosure of every eye, and the details

of her dress and appearance were imprinted upon the memory of every other lady present. All saw that she was dressed showily. Her white bridal hat was of the costliest materials, and was adorned airily with exquisite laces, such as had never been seen before in Waterbury. And her shawl was so elegant that no one could decide upon its fabric.

It had already been rumored in the village that the wife of Mr. Wellmont was the daughter of a wealthy merchant of a distant city, who had been introduced to him by her cousin, Mr. Swinton. The minds of the people were divided upon the circumstances of her history. Some of the most fashionable portion were delighted at the prospect of such an acquisition to their society; but many of the plain, elderly people hoped, if she were a rich man's child, she would not bring any grand airs or modes among them, to make the young people envious, extravagant, and worldly.

As Edith observed with the rest, she said to herself, "Yes, he has chosen well; for, at least, it seems fitting that Mr. Wellmont should wed such splendor and reputation as this, rather than one of my poverty and insignificance. Alas! I should never have indulged such an expectation had he not shown me repeated manifestations of interest; but the folly of construing them as indicating love, against which my dying mother warned me, merits the punishment that I now receive."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MRS. WELLMONT.

THE induction of the wife of Mr. Wellmont to the new duties of society was quite an event in Waterbury. The wife of their former minister had been a meek, unassuming woman, who had gone in and out among them as nearly without reproach as it is possible for one in the position. She had dressed in great simplicity, guarded her words so as to give offence to none, and manifested no disinclination to submit all her affairs, public and domestic, to the supervision and friendly advice of those persons of the parish who had a decided talent for such occupation. The general impression of this excellent woman was, therefore, that she had been very much elevated in attaining the position of a minister's wife, and she never could be thankful enough. They were, consequently, ill-prepared for the advent of a lady among them like Mrs. Wellmont.

The first weeks of her residence in the place, she boarded, with her husband, in the family of Mr. Phanuel, until suitable arrangements could be made for housekeeping. A few of the most prominent people of the society had called upon her ;

and, when Mr. Wellmont had been present, they had received no particularly unfavorable impression of their interview, for he possessed a happy faculty of rendering conversation animated and interesting without apparent effort. But the people could generally discern very little of their minister's wife. She appeared to them at such a distance, giving an impression of something lofty and unattainable, — attired richly and showily, like those tropical mountain-palms, whose trunks are profusely decorated. They felt it not to be that loftiness which results from a chilling and abiding consciousness of superiority, but rather an accomplished indifference, spiced occasionally with satire.

When Miss Leah Shaw called upon Mrs. Wellmont, she divided her attention between some embroidery — on which she always seemed engaged within doors — and little Bessie, the youngest child of Mr. Phanuel, while Mr. Wellmont was left to sustain the conversation. As Miss Leah had long been accustomed to universal attention and deference, this reception was very displeasing to her. Miss Leah had come to give Mrs. Wellmont an especial invitation to meet with the Dorcas Benevolent Society; and stating, with her usual accuracy, the principal object, and other business matters connected with said society, expected her approbation of such a valuable body, and her consequent active coöperation.

When Mrs. Wellmont heard the name of the society announced, she actually laughed, with a glance at her husband of unfeigned sarcasm.

“Mrs. Wellmont is not yet acquainted with our good



objects, Miss Shaw," remarked Mr. Wellmont, striving to mitigate the impression which he felt that his wife was unfortunately making upon a person of so much consequence in the parish. "When she becomes better initiated, she will fully appreciate their interests."

"Come here, pet," said Mrs. Wellmont, at this juncture, to little Bessie. "Is not this dog I am working pretty? See how green are its eyes, and pink the tip of its nose! Bow! wow!"—making a gesture as if the dog were springing at the child. Little Bessie was highly animated with the play, but not more so than Mrs. Wellmont; so that it was with difficulty that Mr. Wellmont could proceed to converse. No words can do justice to the emotions of Miss Leah under such circumstances. But it did not matter to Mrs. Wellmont, who had no idea of taking the trouble to please a person with such an unfashionable aspect.

"We will be sure to attend your meeting, Miss Shaw," remarked Mr. Wellmont, as she arose to leave; "and, in the mean time, accept our most hearty wishes for the success of your benevolent efforts."

Miss Leah walked home even more stiffly than ever; and, with tearful eyes, she said to herself, "If the care of the cause of Zion is to be shared with that woman, how will its ways mourn! Mr. Wellmont is an excellent man; but, what promise have we in such a minister's wife?"

"My dear Bertrade!" said Mr. Wellmont, when they had retired to their private parlor, "could you not have been a

little more gracious to Miss Shaw? I am fearful she left us quite wounded."

"If such a woman as that is one of your first ladies, it would be a curiosity to see the last!" rejoined Mrs. Wellmont. "She was so comical in her old-maidish ways, especially when she marched up to me, so quick and straight, after her introduction, and delivered a long tirade of welcome to the parish, — *her* parish, I should infer, she thinks! When she paused to take breath, I had a mind to ask her if that were all, or had she forgotten a sentence!"

Mr. Wellmont's feelings were now scarcely less injured than were those of Miss Leah; but he forbore to make further comment, — taking a book from his library, and sitting down to read. But, as he read for an hour and turned no leaves, it is scarcely probable that his reflections were concentrated upon what he read. He was at length aroused from his revery by his wife, who began humming an opera-tune, and ended by saying, "If you take the liberty to criticize me, I may presume I have an equal privilege with you."

Mr. Wellmont lifted his eyes from his book, in curiosity.

"I notice your manner, on various occasions, is decidedly ill-bred. I should know, in fact, that you had not been accustomed to society in high life. At the table, for instance, you carry your food to your mouth with your knife, instead of your fork; so that I have looked several times to see if you had not wounded your lips. You pour your coffee and tea into and drink from the saucer, instead of the cup; and

several times you have wholly forgotten to use your napkin. Such ways are positively shocking!"

"Positively shocking, certainly!" said Mr. Wellmont, trying to smile, but failing in the attempt.

" 'Tis folly, only, and defect of sense,  
Turns trifles into things of consequence.' "

"These are not trifles, in my eyes, I assure you, as you might have known from the fact of my mentioning them. And it seems it is a light matter, in your regard, to hurt my feelings; while it is of the greatest importance that a person like that Miss Leah be pleased, who, like her Scripture namesake, is 'tender-eyed,' and otherwise beautiful in person, as well as manner!"

"No, no, Bertrade!" said Mr. Wellmont, now taking a seat beside her. "You must know well I mean nothing of the kind. I only wish that you would be a little more careful to please our people; for a minister and his family are not independent, like others."

"It will be discovered here," retorted the lady, tapping her embroidered white slipper violently upon the carpet, "that one minister's wife is not made to cringe to such people, if others usually are!"

"Now, my dear, these airs of yours are of no sort of consequence with me or my people; so you had better put them away with your finest wardrobe at once, and leave them for city use. Just be natural, be true to the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, and the aspect of things about you will

be very different to you. Certainly you will appear different to others, and infinitely more amiable," said Mr. Wellmont, in good-humor.

"Pray, sir, be aware that you are not schooling a servant! I have not been used to homilies!" replied his wife, in no wise softened.

Mr. Wellmont looked upon the woman beside him, whom he had chosen to be his companion and helpmeet for all the remainder of his life, with profound astonishment and melancholy prescience. In the brief interviews of their courtship she had not discovered this phase of character: the claws had been effectually concealed by the velvety guise of politeness. How often, in his college days, had he boasted to his companions of his knowledge of human nature, as a protection against an unamiable or undesirable companion for a wife! He now thought of the gentle, noble, and interesting girl, whose only fault had been a want of position and fortune, and the contrast between her and this petted child of affluence smote him to the heart.

"It is not only for this month, or the next, but for a life!" he groaned, in the bitterness of his spirit, as he appeared to resume his reading. But the reading, nay, the very presence of his wife, would not contribute now to calm his excited feelings. He retired alone to meditate and pray, as usual when in seasons of perplexity; and, as usual, the blessings which he sought were not withheld. Peace, — calm and holy, — forbearance, and, above all, that charity "which suffereth long,

and is kind," gradually possessed his soul with renewed fervor.

"She is unused to the country," he said, "and these new people and customs are not quite consonant with her temperament; but she will assimilate herself to them in time. I recollect that, at first, I was not at all favorably impressed with Miss Shaw, myself."

A short time after this, Mr. Wellmont called, with his wife, upon the families of Deacon Dennis and Mr. Pickering; and he observed that she was very well entertained, and evidently quite pleased with Mrs. Pickering and her daughters Claudine and Julia. Mrs. Wellmont was much caressed and admired by these ladies; but their attentions were received by her as a matter of course, but yet very graciously.

"I think I shall like the Dennises well, and the Pickerings very much," she said to her husband, afterwards.

"I am very glad, my dear; and, doubtless, you will find many others equally agreeable, and even more valuable," he replied.

"Yet it is to be hoped," he mused, "my wife will not be one of those ladies who have 'dear intimates' and 'especial favorites.' It will not do at all for the wife of a minister. Confidential friends, of some kind, I suppose she must have, as she is young and without experience; but I hope, of all others in my parish, they will not be the Pickerings, with their airiness, or the Dennises, with their pride."

He durst not advise in this matter, however, after his experience of the danger of such a proceeding.

The meeting of the Dorcas Benevolent Society came. Mr. Wellmont proposed to his wife that they should attend at an early hour, that he might have ample opportunity of presenting her to the ladies; to which Mrs. Wellmont replied, with a look of disdainful compassion at his ignorance of the customs of fashionable society, "he might go, if he chose, directly after dinner; but she should not appear there till about a half-hour before tea."

"My dear Bertrade," remonstrated Mr. Wellmont, "although such may be the mode of some particular persons in the circle to which you have been accustomed, it will not answer here. Miss Shaw will be offended if we adopt such formality."

"Miss Shaw again set up for my standard!" interrupted Mrs. Wellmont. "It had been better to have selected her for your wife, instead of one so much inferior in knowledge of Waterbury etiquette as myself!"

Mr. Wellmont was wounded again; for, naturally sensitive, and desirous of love and peace with all, he was not one of those men who can hear hard words unmoved. He loved to be loved; whereas, some men are careless whether they are loved or hated. His mother had guided him to manhood with a loving, even hand; and he had acquired from her influence a cheerful temper, disposed to look upon the bright side of everything, and make the best of the other side when it came. To this new phase of character discovered by his wife, however, he was all unused; and this capricious harshness grated upon his soul, by nature harmonious and delicately

organized, not less than the ear of an exquisite musician is disturbed by the discord produced by an unskilful hand. Escaping from the irksome companionship, he went out for a short walk, scarcely conscious whither he directed his steps. He returned by way of the cemetery, where he paused a few moments for reflection. The pines were as odorous and melancholy as ever, and a late rain had left all nature in tears. It had also darkened the wood of the trees, the iron pales, and the hard paths, so that they wore a deeper cast of gloom. The grass was growing silently and solemnly above the closed eyes of the dead. Violets, each with a tear trembling in its heart, pale wind-flowers and silvery mosses, hung meekly along the ridge of earth which marked the graves, like the fringes of angels' robes. The stream which flowed beside the ground down into the green meadows below, — even as the fabled tenth arm of the ocean, with its sources, flowed around the earth from the palace of rocks and descended into the lower regions, — was swollen to a deep and solemn murmur, running swiftly and darkly under the heavy shadows of the pines.

“Here the dead sleep peacefully,” thought Mr. Wellmont; “no more disturbed by the cares, and sorrows, and passions, of life. It is well to lie down thus in the bosom of the earth when our work is done.” Thoughts of the unfitness and insignificance of worldly vexations naturally recurred to his mind. “How soon will it all have passed, — this busy, carking life, — and then I shall look back and marvel that I was ever overcome or daunted by such trifles as now disturb the tranquillity of my soul!” he said. “My chief efforts should

be to seek, by the grace of God, to prepare myself and the souls committed to my care for the great and last change; not to selfishly strive to build up my own fame and happiness. Here I feel that the pride of earth vanishes to nothing; and, over all, arises the aspiration for that glorious benediction, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father. \* \* \* Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' For this henceforth let me ardently strive, and whatever obstacles I meet may I overcome with love, forbearance, and faith!" Thus early was the bright and strong hope of earthly happiness, of which he had so lately dreamed in the morning of life, returned unto him faded and broken, never to be beautiful more! But, instead, the hope of spiritual peace was growing brighter and stronger until the perfect day. Ah! woe to the disappointed heart which has no such hope!

He had unconsciously reached a small lot, in a retired location, enclosed by a young hedge of evergreens, with a plain white stone to mark two graves. Some old association arrested his steps. He turned, and read upon the stone:

"In memory of Blanchard and Edith Hale. Erected by Edith. The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust!"

The eyes of Mr. Wellmont suffused with tears as he murmured, "Though dead, that blessed woman yet speaks to me, in her old, heavenly manner, words of consolation and hope." Long did he linger about that spot, as one in a dream;



and not till he had prayed and gathered strength to meet the world, did he turn away. On returning to his home, he found his wife dressed, and waiting for him to accompany her to the meeting of the society.

"I began to think you had gone and drowned yourself, in despair of pleasing the ladies of the Dorcas Benevolent," she said to him.

"I scarcely dare to look at you, Bertrade, you are so dazzling in full dress," he smilingly rejoined.

"Am I?" she said, in excellent humor; for nothing could better please her than this compliment.

"I would suggest, however,—" he began; but, losing courage, he stopped.

"What now, my lord? Are not my curls disposed in order? Is my *mouchoir* too much perfumed? Or, shall I add those exquisite earrings my cousin Frank bestowed as a bridal gift?"

"O, nothing of the kind! I only feared that you were too finely dressed; that brocade with laces is very showy, with your jewels, — at least, for such a place as this," he said.

The lady bit her lip with vexation. "You would prefer to have me copy Miss Shaw?"

In silence Mr. Wellmont commenced his preparations, which were soon completed, and he announced himself ready to attend her.

"You look like a scavenger, with your collar awry, and your hair unbrushed!" remarked Mrs. Wellmont.

"I quite forgot my hair!" said Mr. Wellmont, returning to the mirror.

"I have n't forgotten it, by any means," his wife rejoined; "for that was what I fell in love with, at first. I am likely, however, to fall out again, by the way you keep it of late. But men grow careless after marriage, as I have often heard."

"I must not expect to retain a love founded upon a fancy so uncertain," said Mr. Wellmont, in his usual good-humor. "Bad looking hair is rather characteristic of a good head under it; and care of the chevelure is no mark of excellence. It is said that the foretops of all Dr. Johnson's wigs were burned off by the use of the candle in reading."

"How tiresome!" exclaimed his wife, petulantly. "I believe you are always quoting some dull things from some dull book just when it would be least expected of you. You do not open your mouth without letting out these long strings of brilliant sentiments, just as a conjurer blows out ribbons of fire. Why can't you enter into my spirit a little?"

Mr. Wellmont was evidently very much amused at some thought now suggested. His wife observed him with unfeigned curiosity; but he seemed at a doubt about the expediency of saying what he would. Suppressing a laugh, he ventured, however:

"You remember how the devils entered into the herd of swine, and what was the consequence? I was thinking, if I entered into your way of acting and speaking, or into your 'spirit,' as you call it, we shall both be compelled to run violently down a steep place —"

"Now," said Mrs. Wellmont, interrupting him, quickly, "I dare say, though you would have me believe you in jest, that you was never more in earnest. And this discloses what you think of me! How sorry I am that I had not accepted the poorest of the dozens of offers of marriage I received before yours!"

"Neither you nor I are in earnest now, my dear," said Mr. Wellmont, "and I am willing to offer apologies for my heedless words."

To this Mrs. Wellmont vouchsafed no reply, and they were soon on their way to the residence of Father Shaw. But here, again, a fresh difficulty arose. Mrs. Wellmont complained of the damp walking, and of the danger of soiling her dress and shoes. "I have always been accustomed to papa's carriage; and how shocking this seems, to walk in full dress!" she said, with an air of dejection.

"Mr. Phaniel offered to carry you in his chaise, if you would like to go any time before half-past three; but he was going away, and could not wait longer than that time," said Mr. Wellmont.

"Why did n't you tell me, then?" asked Mrs. Wellmont, tartly.

"I thought the information would be useless, after you had expressed a decided determination to be fashionably late. However, it is not far, my dear, and I dare say no harm will come to you from the walk," he replied, with a desire to smooth the troubles away as fast as they came, yet feeling it

was a little painful, after all, to be blamed by his wife for conforming to her caprices.

The society had wondered much at the tardiness of the minister and his wife; at least, that portion who had no particular charity for people who lived in all things according to fashion. But Mrs. Pickering, who had herself come late, said they should not expect such ladies as Mrs. Wellmont to attend earlier.

"But, if all come in this way, how much shall we be likely to accomplish?" said Miss Leah. "We never expect a minister's wife to do any work in our meetings, to be sure; but we expect that she will be first, to set a good example, and show, by her presence, that she coöperates heartily with us."

Mr. and Mrs. Wellmont were met at the door by Miss Leah, who looked solemnly reproachful at the minister's wife, for to her were all such delinquencies now attributed. After waiting for Mrs. Wellmont to unshawl above stairs, she was conducted into the parlor, in which all the ladies sat, expectant and curious. The ceremony of an individual presentation ensued, — Mrs. Wellmont performing her part as if it were all very fatiguing, and quite superfluous, — at the conclusion of which, after staring coolly about her, as though each person were but a chair or a footstool, she selected her seat in the neighborhood of Claudine Pickering and Alitha Dennis. Mr. Wellmont paused to inquire after the families of each; and, dispensing kindly words and smiles all about him, was welcomed with the same by every one. Alitha and Claudine were well satisfied with Mrs. Wellmont's distinction in their

favor, and exerted themselves to be as agreeable as possible. With those to whom Mrs. Wellmont thought it worth the while to be agreeable she could condescend to unusual familiarities, and even affect a manner quite childish, which she thought was the perfection of *naïveté*.

A few minutes before the serving of tea, Father Shaw made his appearance. Mr. Wellmont addressed him with great heartiness (for he had come to like the plain-spoken old man as much as he had at first underrated him); but it was not without a little anxiety in his eye that he conducted him to his wife. Mrs. Wellmont regarded him with a mixture of surprise and fear, — such a fear as a superficial mind always feels in the presence of sound common sense, without any meretricious surrounding. There was a plain, steady look, not wholly devoid of wit, in his eye, which disquieted her, despite her accustomed nonchalance with plain people, and told of an independence of the opinion of others quite equal to her own, though based upon a widely different principle. Father Shaw cordially extended his hand to her, which being just touched, he drew back suddenly, and, after scrutinizing his palm, said :

“Wat’s the matter now, ma’am? Have I got anything on my hand that had n’t ought ter be there?”

Mrs. Wellmont stared with unaffected surprise.

“I thought so, ’cause ye jest touched my fingers as if they’s kivered with pizen. Now, I like to *shake* hands, as if a body that’s got a heart had met a body that’s got a heart. But, I suppose, ’t an’t the way perlite folks do now-a-days.” Then,

contrary to all expectation, he manifested his intention of continuing his acquaintance with Mrs. Wellmont on that occasion, by saying to Claudine Pickering, "Will you be so good, Cindy, as to give up your chair to me? There's a better one t'other end of the room, by my Leah, there. I want to talk with this ere woman a minute or so!"

A general titter now ran round the room, and curiosity was excited as to what was coming now; for they knew Father Shaw so well as to be certain that it would be something worth hearing.

"I've hearn," he began, "that you're a mighty fine lady, and have come from gentlefolks' quarters. I suppose you're larnt in a deal of stuff; but I want to know ef you've got a good kitchen eddication."

"I never thought much about it," said Mrs. Wellmont, blushing; "we had servants at home to keep that part of the house in charge."

"I dare say," said Father Shaw, pinching the top of his nose between his eyes, as was his custom when not suited; "but, let me tell ye, ef ye don't know nothing about such things as belong to keepin' a house, ye'll get along dreadful shiftless-like, at best. A minister needs a wife who's a perfect kitchen gineral, and can cut down all holler afore her, else every bit the people put in at the doors will go out at the sink dreem. Ef she's help, it don't mend the matter a mite; it only makes things wuss; for there's no sort of critter so destroying as a hired gal without the woman's eye on her."

One on 'em will make way with more than a corn-barn full of rats!"

Mrs. Wellmont now wore an expression of unmitigated scorn, and drew up her dress, as if in fear of contact with such a barbarian.

"It is too bad that he should show off so before her, when we wish to let her know that we are something here!" whispered Mrs. Pickering to Mrs. Dennis. Mr. Wellmont essayed to change the topic of conversation, but in vain.

"Can you make a good pudding, and salt it right? Or do you know, ma'am, how to boil a cabbage, or to roast a spare-rib to a turn?" continued Father Shaw.

"I never tried," said Mrs. Wellmont, curtly, yet without well knowing how to be angry, so many ladies were laughing about her.

"Well, you ought ter try right off, afore you set up at housekeeping yourself; and, ef you can't git anybody to show you, you come to me, and I'll show you myself. You need n't look so scornful, for I know more about such things than a dozen women all in a row. Arter my wife died, I cooked a sight; and some I spiled, and some I made about half right; and bimeby I got so I could cook like all natur', — as well as the best on 'em, furzino."

"I know you cook sometimes now, father," said Miss Leah, "but it is worth one's while to make up their mind to eat after you!"

"Don't you meddle, Leah! You're so mighty partikelar,

nothing ever offers to come up to you, — not even a man who wants to get a wife ! ”

At this juncture, Miss Leah disappeared from the room.

“ There are some things ef a minister’s wife don’t know how to do she ’ll come out at the leetle end of the horn at last,” resumed the old man. “ She must know how to cook, to dress babies and make ’em mind, and go round among folks in such a way as to make ’em all think a deal of her. There’s one thing more, ma’am, that’s very valerble : can you make a good long prayer about the heathen, and niggers, and everything, afore folks ? ”

Father Shaw was very serious himself; but a laugh now burst out, like removing the stopper from a yeast bottle. Mrs. Wellmont could have replied in truth, to his last interrogatory, “ I never tried ; ” but, for wise reasons, she was silent. Mr. Wellmont moved uneasily in his chair, looked at his watch, and thought hard for something to say, but did not succeed in the effort. To throw off her embarrassment, Mrs. Wellmont made some observation to Mrs. Pickering.

“ Won’t you speak a little louder, ma’am ? ” said Father Shaw. “ I an’t hard of hearing, though I ’m old enough to be ; but I see you ’ve got a way of talking so low and mincing, a body has to strain their ears with all their might to hear a word. I s’pose ’t is the fashion, an’t it ? ” turning to Mr. Wellmont. “ It’s a mighty poor one ! I like to hear women speak as ef they ’d some sense and spice in ’em, and warn’t afraid of being hurt. I don’t want they should holler,



or talk very loud; but I can't bear to hear them talk as ef their mouths were in a bag of cotton."

"If it is the fashion, it prevails among barbarians as well as with us," observed Mr. Wellmont; "for travellers tell us, in some African kingdoms the court fashion requires that the voice be scarcely audible."

"Well, I thought 't was a kind of a flat, nigger way of talking; it don't seem sensible to me, and I know such women as John Adams' wife, and Hannah Adams, and Molly Stark, and all the smartest ones of the country, never talked in no such foolish way. I speak on 't 'cause all our gals are follerin' arter the fashion, jest as they do arter everything that comes along, and it makes me ache to hear them wispin', lispin', diddlin' with their words, as ef they 's ashamed on 'em, as much as a puppy is when there 's something fastened on ter his tail."

Miss Leah now reappeared and announced that the tea was prepared, and for the time Father Shaw's catechizing was suspended.

The ladies stood about the supper room, while a table, well filled, was in the centre, from which the younger ladies helped. A smaller table was prepared for Mr. and Mrs. Wellmont and Father Shaw, around which they could be seated. This arrangement Mrs. Wellmont declined; she preferred standing with the Pickerings to sitting with Father Shaw. After the invocation of a blessing by Mr. Wellmont, the active operations of serving were commenced. Several ladies attentively waited upon Mrs. Wellmont, notwithstand-

ing which, she seemed in danger of privation. She was very particular about the making of her tea, and everything else pertaining to the satisfaction of her appetite, and made no scruple in manifesting it. It was observed she made no use of those simple courtesies which gracefully acknowledge and repay assistance, but received all attentions without the merest expression of gratitude.

"Just hear him, now," whispered Claudine to Mrs. Wellmont, indicating Father Shaw, who was drinking from his saucer, with loud inhalations; "he does n't eat so politely as your husband."

Mrs. Wellmont laughed lightly. "But my husband is not perfect in that particular, as I have already told him," she observed.

"Indeed!" said Claudine, very much interested; "we all think, here, he is perfect in everything."

"You don't know him as well as I do," said Mrs. Wellmont, affecting to joke, but in reality annoyed to hear her husband's praise instead of her own. She was one of those wives who make no scruple of blaming their husbands to their dear confidential friends.

Miss Leah was a superior country housekeeper, and her provision on this occasion was liberal and excellent. But Mrs. Wellmont ate with unusual daintiness, as though quite unused to such an entertainment. And this was the fact; for, at her father's fashionable home, she had never sat down to a tea-table furnished with anything more than very thin slices of bread and cake.

"It seems so odd," she said to Claudine, "to see no silver about a table, except the spoons. No service of plate or glass; not even silver forks, or a basket for the cake. And I see no finger-bowls."

"La, no! I dare say many of these people never heard of such a thing."

Several of the elderly people regarded Mrs. Wellmont narrowly; the result of their scrutiny was apparently not very satisfactory, for they shook their heads and exchanged volumes of meaning through their spectacles, and behind their hands placed to their lips, becoming thus unwittingly copyists of Solomon's famous picture of "Scandal," at the Exhibition of the British Institution. But it was all the same to the object of their remarks, who was one of those young persons to whom the old folks are of no sort of consideration.

In the evening the young gentlemen came, like flies attracted by sweetmeats, and all the lower rooms were filled. Mr. Wellmont would have chosen to leave at an early hour, but he saw that could not be, for his wife had soon become quite animated, in the centre of a select circle. Mr. Solomon Acre had always been a prominent personage in these meetings; but, much to the regret of the ladies, young and old, he had left the place. Other ladies, who felt humble and neglected, sat apart with their sewing, and talked in low voices of the diseases of themselves, children, and neighbors, or of the last female prayer-meeting, while occasionally they glanced at the charmed circle, with sad eyes, and wondered within their hearts if they should ever, in eternity, sit among the

highest, and, like others around them, be happy and fortunate. Mrs. Dr. Humphrey, who was a lady of superior intelligence and refinement, as beautiful in heart as in mind and person, and of such an undisputed position in society that wherever she went, there, as Seneca said, was the honored place, saw something of this intuitively, and left a gentleman, with whom she had been conversing, to join this group. Believing in that somewhat gone-by, forgotten doctrine, that many who are first shall be last, and the last first, she recognized no superior attractions in Mrs. Wellmont and her set. She inquired of each after her welfare, not with a kind of compassionate sense of duty, but in a thorough genuine kindness that went direct to their hearts.

Perceiving Miss Leah enter the room with a face a little anxious and weary, she transferred her attentions to her, to inform her, for encouragement, how well she had succeeded that day, and how happy her guests were in consequence. Mrs. Humphrey did not use flattery, for she was above that; but she grew happier and more beautiful daily, in the glorious work of trying to make everybody, without distinction, as happy as possible around her. And, for this, Providence, true to its promises, blessed her richly, and her children after her.

The old ladies, very much comforted and enlivened after their three cups of strong hyson, made their knitting-needles and their fingers fly cheerfully, without stopping to care for such nonsense and vanity as aristocracy. How happy they looked as they told stories of the past, and gossiped about the

present and future, — of what strange things happened in their courting-days, and were happening now, in the courting-days of the young folks! Not less pleased among themselves were the old gentlemen, with Father Shaw in their midst, talking about the huskings and trainings of old times, and interlarding it all frequently with interjectional parentheses of the difference in the merry-makings now. Mr. Wellmont was sitting in a corner with Deacon Goodwin and Dr. Humphrey, elucidating a religious topic. On the whole it was a time which is set down with a white stone.

“I tell you Mrs. Wellmont is a rusher!” whispered one of the gentlemen of the select circle to Mr. Squiers, as the evening waned apace.

“A queer one,” replied the young lawyer, with a curious look; “I should think, however, there should be some amendment, or special statutory provision, to the constitution under which she acts.”

“I should hardly have thought she would have been the choice of Mr. Wellmont for a wife,” said the other.

“O, I give it as my judgment,” replied Mr. Squiers, “in the process of getting a wife, Mr. Wellmont was not so much satisfied with the writ of *capias ad satisfaciendum*, which secured the lady herself, as with the writ *levari facias*, which secured the estates of the lady.”

“She is not handsome, certainly.”

“No; but she has a certain air of superiority, of indifference, or what we legal people call contempt of court, which is quite impressive; though she does not appear as well as Miss

Dennis, who seems to have learned that lesson not less important to a lady in society than to a judge in court, — to abide by precedents."

"Alitha has also goods and chattels enough in prospect to make it worth the while to carry on a long process of courtship," interposed Zephaniah Wilkins, who had a rare faculty of making people uncomfortable, and moreover suspected that the young lawyer had an interest in the direction of Alitha and the deacon's property.

And so the hours of the meeting passed, closed at last by a short, fervent, and appropriate prayer, by Mr. Wellmont.

"You seem to be very well acquainted with the women here," observed Mrs. Wellmont, a little nervously, to her husband, on their way home, "and one of them has already testified to me that they think you perfection itself."

Mr. Wellmont was fatigued, dispirited, and not happier in the prospect of conjugal love from his wife's appearance that evening; he therefore replied, in a manner which he sincerely repented immediately after, that it was of little importance to him what they or his wife thought of him; and was punished by a fit of sullen silence in Mrs. Wellmont, which continued till the next day at dinner, when the appearance of a favorite dish on Mr. Phanuel's table broke the spell.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### MYSTERIES UNRAVELLED.

EDITH had scarcely become initiated into her new duties, when she received intelligence which changed the tenor of her thoughts, and was destined to largely influence her plans for the future. It came from her friend, Mary Pickering. An extract ran thus :

“ You will not marvel, dear Edith, at the deep, irresistible tide of joy that now flows through my heart, when I tell you some of the events which have transpired with me since you left. Mr. Raymond came, as was expected ; but, contrary to all the plans, he came not for Julia, but for *me*. It happened in this way : Horace received a letter from Julia, shortly after his return home, apparently to make some inquiries in regard to school-books necessary to purchase for the next term, but in reality to elicit a response of friendship from him. It came to him in the midst of the most engrossing engagements, in attendance upon his dying father. He, however, took time to write hastily and briefly to Julia and myself at one sitting. But the letters were scarcely concluded, when he was summoned to attend to business, the purport of which

you will presently understand. His father's death transpired immediately after. He concluded, when here, from the fact of no letter having reached me, in the anxieties and abstraction of that event, the letter written to Julia was sent only, while mine was mislaid or lost. He has since written me that he has found the letter among papers then hurriedly put aside, and has ascertained that a letter of business to a mercantile correspondent was sent away by his servant, instead of the one addressed to me.

"When Horace subsequently addressed father, asking for the hand of his daughter in marriage, in consequence of the definiteness of his previous letter to me, it never occurred to him that the object of his preference could be mistaken. And Julia naturally fell into the error, having already conceived strong hopes of gaining his favor, from the friendliness of his letter to her. She now experiences a bitter disappointment, and I compassionate her deeply. I believe that ma designs sending her on a journey for the present.

"At my especial request, our marriage will be delayed until you conclude your present engagement, when I hope we shall be reunited, not soon to be separated again, unless at your own will, or that of Providence.

"I send you a communication written by the late Mr. Raymond, which Horace desired me to enclose with my letter to you, and the nature of which he has disclosed to me. I will not linger now to comment upon your good fortune, lest I rob you of one half the pleasure of the surprise. I will conclude



by saying that this intelligence respecting you, my ever dear friend, renders my present happiness complete."

The enclosed paper read as follows :

"For the benefit of the wronged, and for the relief of my soul in the prospect of death, I now disclose a circumstance of my early life, which, with its results, has since clouded all my days. When I was a young man — a great many years ago — I loved a girl by the name of Blanche Hale. She was an orphan, dependent upon an uncle, while I was the only son of one of the wealthiest citizens of Boston. When my father learned of my love, he forbade it. He swore, if I married the penniless girl, he would make a will and give all his estate to my sister. I had not less spirit than himself. If I had known I should have been shot to the heart for it, I would have married Blanche. She loved me as I loved her, although I was sometimes madly jealous of rivals, for she was so beautiful that many loved her. One in particular, who had long been envious of my good fortune, annoyed me continually. In my impetuosity, to secure myself against all prospect of losing Blanche, I obtained her consent to a secret marriage, though not without much persuasion, for she abhorred deception, and was as good as she was lovely. I foresaw that my father could not live long, for he was suffering under a dangerous disease ; and I thought, if I waited cautiously, all would eventually result according to my wishes.

"We went privately, and without attendants, to a distant state, and were married by the first magistrate I found ; from whence we returned, and lived at our several homes as be-

fore, — my absence being satisfactorily accounted for to my father by the fact of having business for him in the same direction, which I transacted. As I appeared to acquiesce with the command to forsake Blanche, I came again into favor with my father, and he now wished to see me advantageously settled, as he called it, before he died. He had set his heart upon my marrying the daughter of his partner in business, — a girl who, like her family, possessed no attractions but money. I did not openly thwart his wishes; and it was soon currently reported that I was about to marry this girl. This report reaching the ears of Blanche, she was overcome with grief, until I reassured her. Presently there was a prospect of my becoming a father, and I prepared to remove Blanche to the home of a relative at some distance, before the fact should obtain publicity. But she had not left her uncle's before my father, most fortunately, as I impiously thought, died suddenly, and left me the master of my own actions. Overjoyed at my fortune, I was about to remove her to my own home, and openly acknowledge our marriage, when the former suitor of Blanche, divining my intentions, boasted to me, with the face of a friend, of her inconstancy to me. I was stung almost to madness; but I doubted his word, and challenged him to a duel. 'I accept the challenge,' he answered, with a smile of triumph, 'if you persist in offering it after reading this;' and he produced a letter from Blanche, addressed to him with the same familiarity she had written to me since our marriage, alluding to the child,

of which *he* was the father, and otherwise substantiating his assertions.

"I said no word in reply. I left him with my heart suddenly frozen to ice. I never saw Blanche again after this, for all my former love had changed to unmitigated hate. She wrote to me repeatedly, but I returned her letters unopened. She once came to my house, and implored the servants, even on her knees, to show her to me. But my orders were peremptory that she should be expelled from the house, and they were strictly obeyed. I stood just above stairs, and heard her great sobs as she went out. My God! I can hear them now! I have heard them by day and night since!

"Her disgrace became public. As a last refuge, she now openly asserted her marriage to me, which I firmly denied, with well-feigned astonishment. I knew that no proofs to the contrary could be obtained, otherwise I should have adopted a different course. I had previously taken care to ascertain if our marriage had been entered upon record by the magistrate who had married us; and, finding that he had neglected so doing until the prescribed time had expired, the expediency of denying my marriage was first established in my purposes. I had retained the legal certificate of our marriage in my own possession, and, on being informed of her treachery, had destroyed it. In her implicit trust in me, at the time of our hasty marriage among strangers, she had neglected even to ask the name of the magistrate who had married us, and to seek him personally was then impossible for her. The world believed me, and branded her with

infamy,—for my character had always stood fairly, and in such cases judgment is given in favor of the strongest. Even her uncle deserted her in this extremity, and expelled her from his house. She then went to the home of a relative at some distance, and, shortly after giving birth to her child, died.

“I immediately went abroad. My mother had been dead for years, and I left my sister in charge of my father’s partner, who was her guardian. As this man had been very much angered at my refusal to marry his daughter, he contrived after my departure to effect a marriage between my sister and his son, who was a coarse, uneducated, small-souled man, and altogether unsuited for one of her refined and sensitive nature. I knew nothing of these designs until she wrote to inform me of her marriage, and it was then too late to interfere. I have always reproached myself for leaving my sister to the care of others; for the suffering I afterwards learned she endured in consequence was another rebuke for my impetuosity of action. Before I returned she died of a lingering disease, having given birth to several children, who, all save one, died in their infancy — and this one proved an imbecile. So the property left to my sister by my father fell into the entire keeping of this Rufus Sykes, her husband, who clutched it with the grasp of a miser, and has since proved himself only worthy of contempt.

“I remained abroad many years, unwilling to return to the scene of my former disappointments, ever miserable, and sometimes driven by my reflections almost to despair. In Rome, one winter, I met an American family with whom I became

intimate. Among the family was a daughter, a refined, gentle girl, who betrayed her regard for me from the first. Her father, understanding my undoubted position as a man of property, was very courteous to me, and strove to effect a union between his daughter and myself. I had lost all faith in woman; but the truthful tenderness and unaffected goodness of this young girl appealed at last to my respect. I never could be in love again; but the idea that, in the event of my sudden death, the remainder of my father's estate would also fall to this Sykes' possession, made me willing to marry, for this man I had always thoroughly hated. After my marriage, I returned with my wife to my home, and plunged myself into my business affairs, to withdraw my memory from the past as much as possible. I would not retain a business connection with my father's former partner, and, after much difficulty, the partnership was dissolved. Notwithstanding my efforts, I could not bring my mind to tranquillity, and I came to indulge the hope of purchasing peace by interesting myself actively in objects of benevolence which fell under my observation.

"One bitter winter night, on returning home from my counting-room, I discovered a child crouching on my door-steps, and crying piteously. I took her within, and found that she was almost perished with cold and famine. After taking care that she was newly-clothed and fed, in answer to my inquiries I learned that she had only a father, who was sick in a miserable room, in one of the most wretched portions of the city; and when she repeated his name, great Heavens! it was a name I remembered but too well. I was

about to send her home with a servant, when a certain indefinable desire to meet my old rival and enemy urged me to return with her in person. I found him in his wretchedness, but in such a situation that I could scarcely feel any emotion other than pity. He was lying upon a heap of straw, beside which the storm beat in through the broken window-panes, and between the crevices of the building, while he lay prostrate with disease, and emaciated almost to a skeleton.\* He did not know me; but when I spoke my name, distinctly and sternly, he started wildly, and began to mutter about Blanche Hale. Then I saw oozing from his mouth a stream of blood. In his excitement he had broken a blood-vessel, and seemed dying. I left him to summon a physician to his aid. When he had partially recovered, he told me, in broken whispers, that Blanche Hale had been innocent of all the guilt he had charged upon her; that the letter he showed me as her own, addressed to him, was a forgery. He had possessed himself of one of her letters to me, by bribing a servant in her uncle's house, and so discovered the secret of her marriage. 'You can find the original letter now in the bottom of that old box, there,' he said, pointing with his skeleton finger towards the only article of furniture in the miserable room; and then continued, though very much exhausted, 'God only knows how much I have suffered since that guilty deed. Everything has gone against me. And I die now the most miserable of deaths. My poor child!' He could say no more, for the blood flowed freely again; but he cast on me a look which I have remembered to this hour. I answered it

by saying, 'You are forgiven by me, and I will be a father to your child.' He closed his eyes to shut in the tears, and never opened them again. He died before morning, and I was afterwards faithful to my promise to befriend his child.

"My next effort, after awakening from the shock which this discovery had occasioned, was to make the only reparation left me for the great wrong the innocent had suffered. I went to the place in which Blanche had died, and sought for her child. I learned that it was a boy of some fifteen years, and was apprenticed to a mechanic in a neighboring town. After having sought out the mother's grave, and, with tears, such as I had never shed before since my childhood, repeated my vow to protect the injured child, I renewed my efforts in secret. But when I reached the place to which I had been directed, the boy was gone. He had run away but a week before. By a neighbor of his master I learned that he had been misused, — tasked heavily, often severely beaten for slight offences, and always provided scantily with food and clothing. How my heart groaned within me to hear this! and my self-accusings daily became more poignant. I next used every possible endeavor, as God is my witness, to discover the lost boy; but in vain. After a long, fruitless search, I settled into a disappointed, broken-hearted hypochondriac. My first child by my second wife, a noble boy, whom I had worshipped, had died a few months before these events. And my wife, who was constantly afflicted by my increasing irritability and gloom, became a prey to sorrow and that subtle disease, consumption,

— which steals its victim unawares, — and, after giving birth to another son, sunk gradually to the grave.

“ I felt that my retribution had come, never to leave me for a moment; for the thought of the child of poor Blanche became to me an abiding sorrow. Years and years of misery dragged on, while I heard no more of the child, whom I knew must, if living, have come to manhood.

“ But when I went to Waterbury, a short time since, Mr. Pickering invited me to go to the cemetery in that place to see a new family monument he had recently erected. I went, and, while examining the ground, I accidentally read the record of the death of *Blanchard Hale*. The name struck me powerfully in a moment, and I recalled the fact that this was the name of him for whom I had been searching for so many wretched years; and the age corresponded exactly. Concealing my emotion, I made the most careful inquiries concerning the deceased, and learned that he had resided in Waterbury only about ten years, having removed thither from New York.

“ I then discovered why I had missed of my object in my search; for, though I had examined the records of this state and the state in which he was born, for many years, to discover his location, I had not thought of pursuing my investigations in New York; and, for the last fifteen years, I had given over all efforts as useless, believing he was dead. Upon the representation of being partially acquainted with the father of the deceased, I obtained an interview with his widow, and found her the most accomplished and amiable of



women. I saw my grandchild, and with difficulty was prevented from discovering myself. This I could not do; for I had suffered so long and silently, my sorrow seemed buried in my own heart too deeply to bring forth to the stare and reproach of others. I learned their misfortunes, and resolved to befriend them as soon as I could decide upon the most practicable method. Not long after this, my son came to me with a desire to teach school one quarter in Waterbury; and, contrary to his expectations, I expressed no objections, taking care to recommend this mother and daughter to his particular notice, upon the plea of an old obligation I was under to the deceased husband and father, and requesting him to mention in his letters to me anything of interest which might occur respecting them. In his first letter he wrote that the mother was dead, and the daughter at present suitably provided for by the benevolence of friends. I then resolved to make my will, and name this girl one of my heirs; but, before doing this, I have judged it best to write out this statement at different times, when I have been sufficiently capable, that my son may clearly understand why I shall divide my estate between him and another."

Subjoined to this was the following from Horace Raymond:

"When my father had written thus far, he was stricken with the disease which finally terminated his life. On being summoned home, I found him in a state of insensibility, or, at least, imperfect consciousness. In moments of delirium he talked of 'a great wrong' he had committed, of 'the curse of an injured wife,' etc. But, as the hour of his death

approached, by that miracle of dissolution his consciousness seemed to return with all its former clearness and vigor. Summoning me to his bedside, he directed me where to find the paper of which the foregoing is a copy, which being produced, he said, with deep regret, 'O, that I had been spared to write my will! that I could have died with a surety of having done all I could for those who have suffered on my account! Not foreseeing that I should die so soon, I did not hasten the arrangement of my affairs as I should have done. But I trust, my son, that you will perform what I now tell you, without a legal obligation.' Of this I assured him solemnly, and he continued, 'Remember to always provide for the child of Blanchard Hale, late of Waterbury, in all respects the same as though she were your sister. And when she attains the age of her majority, I desire you to settle legally one third of all my estate upon her and her heirs forever. Do this, and you will prosper.' These were his last words. I need hardly add, dear Edith, that it will be my pleasure to faithfully execute my father's commands respecting you."

When Edith had concluded reading this, — had unlocked, as it were, the mysteries of the past, over which she had so much pondered, and beheld, with one swift, tumultuous glance, the brilliant prospect now unclosing before her, —

" With wild surprise,  
As if to marble struck, devoid of sense,  
A stupid moment motionless she sat."

Then she thought of those beautiful psalms which exhort

the heart to praise God for all his mercies and wonderful works to the children of men, and calm and holy thoughts, in harmony with the inspired praises, possessed her soul. Not for days or weeks could she fully realize the great change which had come to her destiny; for she had been of late so much accustomed to disappointment and the straits of poverty, it was not possible to put away the burden at once. And when she recalled the memory of the trials her parents had endured, the great sorrows that had gone over their souls, and left them earth-worn and weary, she could only feel humbly and quietly glad at her own superior good fortune; for she knew that she, like them, might be called to endure yet other and trying vicissitudes, incident to human life.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SHADOWS.

It was the early summer again — the second summer of Mr. Wellmont's residence in Waterbury. His wife's father having purchased the residence of Mr. Phanuel, upon that gentleman's removing from the place, and intimating that it was to be a gift to himself and wife, he sat within his own house now, and from the window of his study beheld the flowers bloom in his own garden. The dew which lay upon their hearts in the morning and evening he likened to tears, which, with a rude breath of wind, or a grasp of a ruthless hand, rained to the ground. They were emblems of his own heart. How had he planned to improve and adorn and enjoy a home he might call his own! And when came the prospect of this beautiful spot gliding so easily into his possession, it had seemed to him another Tempe, irrigated by the silvery and musical Peneus, and bounded to the view by the grand, hoary heights of Olympus and Ossa, the harmonious whole clothed in perpetual loveliness. All internal vexations were to be entirely submerged in the enjoyment of this rare external beauty, which was to receive the imprint of his possession.

But the ownership being in right of another, and that other an exacting, imperious wife, the scene suddenly, and ere he was aware, lost half its attractiveness. The Olympus and Ossa of his imagination were soon hooded with snows, and cloaked with avalanches; and the stream was dark and sullen in its course under the black shadow of jagged precipices. As with the wandering children of Israel, God gave his request, but sent bitterness into his soul.

One morning, as Mr. Wellmont sat with his wife, thoughtfully turning the leaves of a book of engravings, while she pulled the threads from a finished piece of embroidery, he said, "My dear, I have been thinking for some time it would be pleasant to receive a visit from my mother, now that we are housekeeping for ourselves." He concluded this by a constrained breath, as if he had made quite an effort.

"I am expecting considerable company from the city, this season, and I am sure your mother would be quite *de trop*," replied Mrs. Wellmont, with a frown.

"My mother!" exclaimed Mr. Wellmont; "can you speak thus of one dearer to me than life, — one who has hitherto thought nothing too much to sacrifice for my good, and who is always to me a cherished object of love and reverence!"

"What an air of offended pride!" exclaimed his wife, with sarcasm; "but this is the way of some men, who worship their relations, and depreciate their wives, I am sure;" then she added, with a broken voice, "I wish I had remained at home, where I should have been regarded with consideration, at least."

"Now, Bertrade," said Mr. Wellmont, somewhat relenting, and beginning to feel that he was no longer the injured party, "you do not suppose I intended that I loved only my mother, because I spoke thus of her?"

"Indeed I do, sir!" sobbed Mrs. Wellmont.

Thereupon ensued a domestic scene upon which we drop the curtain, only pausing to say that the mother was not invited to make her visit, although the invitation was looked for confidently in every letter.

The clouds having dispersed, and the shower ceased, Mr. Wellmont became cheerful again, with a rainbow over his head, and, while his wife went to give directions for the dinner, he walked in his garden.

"It is certainly agreeable to see all these beautiful plants growing on one's own land," he mused, "and to walk under the shadow of one's own trees, which promise an abundant yield of fruit. After all, I suppose I may have been unthankful, as all of us are prone to be when we attain the accomplishment of our desires. If Bertrade be too fashionable for the wife of a minister, or too inexperienced for a good house-keeper, so that she cannot manage to get up a decent meal with the help of a 'well-recommended cook,' I must content myself with the other and brighter side. Love and charity shall excuse her worldliness, and sunshine shall be the dessert with a poor dinner."

At dinner that day, however, his resolution was tested thoroughly. His favorite roast was done to a crisp; another dish was so little cooked it required the teeth of an antedilu-

vian to masticate it; and a third was so highly seasoned it could not be eaten at all. The handsome table furniture could not quite balance these difficulties with Mrs. Wellmont, who said she would discharge her maid-of-all-work, and obtain another.

"That," said her husband, "is more easily said than done. Nothing do country housekeepers find so difficult to obtain as good help. You already have experienced the truth of this; for we have had three girls in as many weeks, and no one of them has been capable of getting a good dinner."

"How do other people do?" inquired Mrs. Wellmont.

"Generally the mistresses assist in the preparation of their food; else they must make up their minds to close their eyes against all sorts of domestic evil, and eat whatever is set before them, asking no questions for conscience' sake."

"Well, I shall never come down to working in my roasting, smoking, steaming kitchen, for the sake of watching a servant! It is enough for me to think what is best to do, and then give directions. If I can't get better servants, I'll break up and board," concluded Mrs. Wellmont.

As had now become frequently the case, Mr. Wellmont sought refuge from his domestic perplexities in his study, and his wife at her piano or embroidery. But the minister was in no mood for writing a sermon to-day; so, with a book in his hand and a sigh in his heart, he sat by his window and became absorbed in reflection. Hours were thus wasted before he was aware, for his memory had been wandering back through the vista of the years when life had seemed to his

imagination like a hanging garden of the East; and his soul elevated with hope, in which flourished and bloomed the selectest flowers of fancy. But he had grasped at shadows, and found only hard, leaden realities. He thought of the words of David, "Surely every man walketh in vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain;" and he remembered, too, that passage, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a house full of sacrifices with strife." Alas! it had been better if these reflections had come to him before it was too late!

Suddenly arousing himself, he went below stairs, and again entered the presence of his wife, in the effort to convince himself that his unhappy reflections were as a dream which would soon pass away.

The salutation he received, was, "See, Mr. Wellmont, your footprints on my beautiful carpet! you must have neglected your boots after leaving the garden this morning. And I have just discovered some horrid marks upon my sofa, which you suffered your kitten to scratch last evening!"

"Of both your allegations I am ignorant; though I suppose I must plead guilty," said Mr. Wellmont, with a smile.

"I shall go frantic to see my furniture ruined in this way!" continued Mrs. Wellmont, with increasing disaffection, while her eyes were nervously riveted upon the marks she had pointed out.

"The example of Sir Isaac Newton is a good one to recall under such trying circumstances," observed Mr. Wellmont, with a slight spirit of humor lurking about his eyes. "When



his little pet dog, Diamond, had destroyed the labor of several years, by upsetting a candle on his desk, he only exclaimed, 'O, Diamond! Diamond! you little know the mischief you have done.' It is hardly wise to grow frantic over an injury so much less than that sustained by the philosopher."

"You need not trouble yourself to preach to me, if you do to other people!" replied Mrs. Wellmont, not at all mollified by her husband's reproof; "I think too much of *my* things to see them so injured, and smile about it. Let me go to your library, and turn down the pages of your books, and stain and mark over their margins, fly-leaves, etc., and then see if you feel better than I do now! My carpets are elegant, and cost me too much care to have me see them destroyed."

"One would infer," said Mr. Wellmont, "that our household gods were indeed the idols of your worship, and should not be touched with sacrilegious hands. I recommend, in order to go out of doors and return with feet that shall not soil these precious covered floors, we be provided with a couple of mules on which to ride; and, to dignify the animals, they shall be shod with golden shoes, as were the mules which were used by the Emperor Nero and his wife Poppæa."

"It signifies nothing to me what Nero or Poppy used," said Mrs. Wellmont; "but this reminds me of what I was about to tell you before. I must have a saddle horse to ride this summer."

"You cannot be in earnest, Bertrade," answered Mr. Wellmont, very much astonished.

"Indeed, I mean just what I say. I always ride horseback when I am in the country in the summer."

"What would my parishioners say to see the wife of their minister riding past their buildings upon horseback? They would think you had gone mad, and had started on a crusade to the Holy Land. And I myself would fear that in the perils of such an adventure you might, in reality, go to the same place."

"I care not what such people as these think of me," exclaimed the lady contemptuously; "it is quite the fashion to ride horseback. Besides, I heard Mrs. Pickering's daughters say they intended to do so, this season."

"Most probably you said so first."

"Well, and what then?"

"If you set this mode here, Bertrade, I'll give you my opinion in the beginning, that I shall receive intimation that my 'usefulness is at an end' in this parish, before winter," said Mr. Wellmont, with anxiety.

"That would be no great misfortune; for I should much prefer to spend the fashionable season in the city. In fact, now I think of it, winter will be insupportable in such a place as this."

"O, Bertrade!" exclaimed Mr. Wellmont, "how little you understand my feelings!"

"Not less than you understand mine," rejoined his wife.

These words were too true. Neither understood the other;

and both would have been vastly happier with those of their own temperament and manner of life.

"What a waste of sensibility over a reasonable recreation!" exclaimed Mrs. Wellmont, after an irksome silence.

"Are you not aware, my dear," said Mr. Wellmont, "that this custom, like many another, is regarded quite diversely in different sections of the country? In some locations it is a common manner of travelling for convenience,—so common it excites not even curiosity. In some, it is the prevailing fashionable pleasure; in others, as in this vicinity, I assure you it would occasion a great deal of remark; and, for the wife of their minister, it will not do at all."

"It will do," answered his wife, emphatically; "and, if you don't choose to assist me, I shall see old Father Shaw, to-morrow, about his white Hagar. She is a beautiful creature,—a very angel of a horse; and Mrs. Pickering told me he wished to sell her, because she was too spirited for one of his age."

"I hope she will not carry, likewise, the Angel of Death, who is usually represented upon a pale horse," said Mr. Wellmont; "but, if you are really determined in this, I will see about the purchase myself; and I will get a handsome chaise to match, which will be a much pleasanter way of riding."

"I should make an interesting spectacle riding about in a chaise alone!" said Mrs. Wellmont, with provoking obtuseness.

"But I expected to sit beside you; at least, leaving it to

your own choice to carry the reins, or whip, or both. Let me tell you now, however," added Mr. Wellmont, "that you know not with what you are engaging, when you get that horse. I rode after her once, and she came near killing me."

He did not tell her how much nearer she came killing the one who rode with him. Nevertheless, it was all distinctly in his memory.

"Fie!" said Mrs. Wellmont; "a coward! I could manage her with two fingers, I know; for I never rode after a horse yet that frightened me. I would not give anything for a horse that had no spirit."

"Well, I'll try for her, then," said Mr. Wellmont, resignedly; for he knew further opposition would be useless, and he did not like to have his wife think him in reality a coward.

"You need not speak as though there were doubt about getting her," observed Mrs. Wellmont; "for I am willing to give more than any one else would about here. I will say you may go as high as three hundred and fifty, or four hundred."

"Father Shaw would not think of asking one half those sums," rejoined Mr. Wellmont, laughing.

"Our carriage-horses at home cost six hundred apiece," said his wife.

"And Bucephalus, the horse of Alexander the Great, was bought for about ten thousand dollars," continued Mr. Well-

mont; "but neither your instance nor mine is a suitable example for a poor country minister."

"There it comes again! everything must be modelled to the idea of your being a minister. Can't think, speak, dress, or act, in anything as one desires, because, forsooth, you are a minister. There is no servitude like it. In fact, our house-servants at home were much more independent than I am here."

"That is no reproach," replied Mr. Wellmont, with a subdued voice; "the very meaning of the word minister is one who serves. What did the great Exemplar say of this? 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'"

"I never thought of it in that way, before," said Mrs. Wellmont; "our city ministers are revered little short of idolatry, and are elevated to the highest seats everywhere they go. I always thought it a fine thing to marry a minister. But I wish now"—she stopped, blushed, and sighed; for the expression that rested on her husband's face was too painfully serious to escape her notice.

"O, Bertrade!" groaned Mr. Wellmont; "this is the greatest trial of all my life—to be instrumental of causing so much unhappiness to another, and that other a wife!" He was too much affected to say more.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "LET HER SAIL."

SUMMER deepened into autumn ; and, with the exodus of the flowers, and many of the singing birds, went Mrs. Wellmont's gay visitors to their city homes, leaving that lady more dissatisfied with the country and a parsonage than ever. Mr. Wellmont had striven as manfully as possible to resist and overcome all the untoward influences with which he had been surrounded, and submit himself silently to his disappointments. Arduously he had labored for his people, alone and unaided, save by the Spirit who ever helps the infirmities of those who feel their need ; and the people had said, meanwhile, one to another, "How spiritual our minister is becoming ! Nearer and nearer the glories of heaven he gets every Sabbath ! This is the more surprising," they added, "as he is in the midst of so much domestic worldliness."

Feeling never so much away from home as in the presence of his wife and her friends, he had banished himself almost entirely to the solitude of his study, save the time devoted to his pastoral duties ; and thus he had made great progress, spiritual and intellectual. For this, a nature so sensitive,

and naturally yielding to all the sweet influences of affection, as his, must pay its price. As a plant, under the dark shadows of an angled wall, struggles vainly against the chill and gloom, and when the worm enters its roots begins to wither slowly on its topmost leaves, the shadow of disease settled upon his pale, deeply-veined brow, abstracting strength from his voice, and energy from his system. But, with the return of the bracing days of autumn, and a hope of more quiet at home, he gathered new health, and seemed more like himself again. The earth, with its manifold beauties, had something of its olden joy for him, and a keener susceptibility to the friendliness of his people inspired him with greater encouragement than he had felt since the time of his marriage.

It was a morning of all perfections, such as is known only in September, when Mr. Wellmont performed the marriage of Mr. Raymond and Mary, in the home of Mr. Pickering. Without, long bars of sunshine striped the imbrowned lawn, between the heavy shadows of the trees. Apples were falling with a pleasant sound, while the peaches lay in delicious plenteousness upon the ground, or freighted the branches of the trees like pendent globes, half ruby, half gold. The grapes, purple and golden, which hung about the trellises in full, ripening clusters, were scarcely less luxurious than those in the pictures of the fruit of Eschol. Under the silver-leaf trees the leaves, with their white linings uppermost, lay thickly, like the pavement of Odin's silver palace; and some of them, floating down the brook which ran beside the garden, flashed in the sunlight like silver stars.

But within, more beautiful than all, was the bride. Not beautiful as the term is sometimes used ; but in peace, and purity, and love, as a meek-eyed Madonna, or as Hlyn the Gentle, who kisses away the tear from the eye of the unfortunate. She wore no ornament, save a few bright autumn leaves wreathed within the braids of her dark hair. From these a gossamer veil depended like a mist.

Often had the mother thought Mary the least hopeful of all her daughters, the heir-prospective of an inferior destiny. She had always been the poorest specimen of the art of the artificial mother ; as Rivarol, the French satirist, called the junior Buffon " the worst chapter in the natural history of his father." Now, the pride of Mrs. Pickering had reached its highest aim in this same neglected, unattractive daughter.

Mr. Wellmont, on this occasion, was unusually disturbed. The habitual equanimity of his soul was gone. His voice was sad and uncertain, his brow was even paler than usual, and his thin hands trembled as he raised them in prayer. After the ceremony he had few pleasant words or apposite anecdotes for each, as was his custom. And wherefore ? There was one present whom he could never meet without emotion. Now his emotion was pain ; for the presence of Edith had awakened all the memories of the past, when the hours of love had filled his life with beauty. Edith had never appeared more self-possessed and calm. Accidentally meeting Mr. Wellmont, she addressed him with graceful composure, inquired if he were suffering from ill-health, and concluded by asking him to present her to his wife.

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"I s'pose I must go and congratulate the bride," said Father Shaw, as he saw one after another addressing Mary. "Raymond I must call you now," he said. "Well, I'm right glad to see you lookin' so smilin'. You deserve a good husband, and I guess you've gut the article!"

"Thank you, Father Shaw," rejoined Mary.

"I hope you'll both be happy as clams till your shell of mortality breaks, and you quit for the 'tarnal world. But there's one thing I want to say about this ere love, there's so much nonsense telled of now-a-days," he continued, looking alternately from Mary to Mr. Raymond. "You mustn't expect love will prove what you think now 't is. This ere love is plaguy onsartin. It's like arsenic. That are, you know, in some states, is a valerble medicine, and makes some of the best paints and things we have; but, in some other states, it's the deadliest pizen, and will kill a body without fail. And so, in some states, love is a good thing, and does a deal of sarvice in the world; but, ef it an't used right, it's as bad as pizen, and will kill a body's heart so dead nothin' can cure it agin. Now, you, Mister, don't be such a fool as to think you'll make your wife love you more by beginnin' to tell her how many other women have loved ye, and callin' such and such women you see about mighty handsome, and how much more Miss So-and-so knows than she, and goin' round with a long face at everything she does that don't quite suit yer nod-dle. Ef you do arter this sort, you'll find yer love turnin' to pizen, quick, I'll tell ye. The times are gittin' shockin' wicked with married folks, as well as some others."

"That is your opinion, then, Father Shaw," now interrupted Mr. Wellmont, who, seemingly with a wish to divert his thoughts, came and sat near the old man.

"Yes," continued Father Shaw, without looking at Mr. Wellmont, "and of ministers, too!"

"Have a little mercy," said Mr. Raymond, smiling in good-humor, for he well understood the peculiarities of Father Shaw. "Ministers should not be spoken lightly of. They should rather be dignified with honorary titles, as was St. Thomas Aquinas, who acquired such a great reputation he was called the *angelic doctor*, the *eagle of divines*, the *angel of the schools*, and the *fifth doctor of the church*."

"As for 'angelic doctor,'" said Father Shaw, "I've no objection to that are; for most all women now think the doctors of divinity angelic; and some men do. But them other names are about as sensible as most of titles gi'n to ministers. Some on 'em, these days, ought ter be called the *hawk of divines*, some the *sniipe of divines*, and so on. As for Mr. Wellmont, here, I don't think he desarves any such name. Ef I *did* think so, though, I would n't say what I have said. But, as I was tellin' about vartue: it's a great deal wuss about such things than it used to be when I was young. People — that is, *some* people — don't make northin' of lovin' other folks now arter they're married; as ef there was somethin' mighty smart in 't, and as ef what belongs to other folks is a great sight better than what's a body's own. But these ere ways lead, soon or later, right to the biggest torment of some kind or other that ever was heard on, even if they an't

found out; for there's One who sees inter all hearts. And, Mary," continued the old man, "I hope you'll be a maracle among wives; for women are 'bout as bad, ginerally, as men. 'Who can find a vartuous woman?' asked one of old."

"But, Father Shaw, you are not one without faith in the goodness of his fellow-creatures, I hope?" interrupted Mr. Wellmont.

"No; I have a deal of respect for good folks, and 'specially for good women; and I b'lieve they an't skass, neither. I meant that where there is evil doings, women, as a ginerall thing, are as much to blame as men. Mary, here, is one of my children, and I talk to her jest as I think."

"Yes, Father Shaw," answered Mary, pleasantly, "I am always grateful for your good advice."

"I an't agoin' to keep you harkin' to an old man like me any longer, such a time as this," he added; "so, God bless you, child, and your husband, and make yer both jest as happy all the days of yer life as you are now, and 'bring yer round to heaven at last!"

"Don't leave us so soon," said Mary and Mr. Raymond.

"Yes; I feel kinder bad to think you're goin' away where I shan't see your face as I have done," he answered, shaking Mary's hand heartily. "And I'll go home, and go to work in my shop, to drive the thoughts on't away, ef I can. A weddin' is allers as solemn to me as a funeral."

Mr. Raymond invited him cordially to visit them in their future home, adding, as an inducement, that he would make every effort to render such a visit pleasant.

"I dare say," said Father Shaw; "but I don't like to go to Boston, of late years. The noise makes me dizzy-like; and to see all that bustling harum-scarum so thick everywhere makes it seem as ef I was in Tophet, and everybody was using a drum-stick. How you can stay in such a place all the time, I don't know. I tell my son so; but he only laughs, and says I an't used to such things. I'm sartin I never want to be. Good-by." As he turned away the tears came to Mary's eyes; for, until that moment, she had not realized how dear were her few old and tried friends.

Mrs. Wellmont had either omitted to recognize Edith as the rejected applicant for the school in Birhampton, or, under the more favorable auspices in which she now appeared as a relative of Mr. Raymond, found it expedient to be unusually gracious to her on this occasion. Mr. Wellmont, observing them in conversation, and having some curiosity about the nature of such an interview, approached their vicinity and listened, while he was apparently engrossed in examining the books upon the table. He heard his wife say, in reply to some remark of Edith: "I never have read it; for, between company and embroidery, I don't get time to read. Besides, ladies who read much are always horribly humdrum and blue." Edith opened her large eyes a little wider.

"That style of dress in which Claudine appears to-day is perfectly lovely!" exclaimed Mrs. Wellmont, rapturously, in the next breath. "That lace upon her collar is real Valenciennes, as I live! I declare I did not think they could tell one nice lace from another, here in this country place!"

Edith next inquired if she liked residing in Waterbury.

"O, between us," she answered, "I have a dull time of it, at the best. Though I've contrived to wear off the long, heavy days, by one thing and another, in the way of amusement. I ride horseback often, — my favorite exercise; and every time the folks have run to the windows and out of the doors to see me, as though I had been riding on an elephant through the streets. It was really amusing!"

Mr. Wellmont could listen no longer. With a flush of pain upon his face, he joined them to inform his wife that he had an engagement which rendered it necessary for him to leave immediately. Edith displayed no triumph in this hour of her ascendancy. She had not a disposition for coquetry; and, if she had been disposed to make Mr. Wellmont conscious of his errors of the past, the settled mortification he betrayed was sufficient retribution.

At the departure of the bridal party for the tour of travel, an hour later, Mrs. Pickering, by an effort, shed a few tears upon her richly embroidered handkerchief, and, throwing her arms with vehemence about the neck of her son-in-law, entreated him ever to remember her as the dear, devoted mother of himself and wife; after which she partially swooned, and was carried off to her room. The father could say nothing; but he imprinted an affectionate kiss upon Mary's brow, and turned away to conceal his tears.

The appearance of Mrs. Wellmont before Edith rebuked Mr. Wellmont more certainly than would the most pungent and clear essay upon the moral necessity of conscientiousness

in affairs of the heart. He was aware of this truth before; but, in presence of the one whom, of all others, he had injured, the inferiority of his wife in all the true graces of character was thoroughly demonstrated. Her sarcastic comments upon the people about them he felt were not only exceedingly injurious to his position, but unbecoming a true lady. This, however, had become such a habit of hers, that he lived in continual apprehension of serious evil; for he well knew upon no other point are people so sensitive as that of a charge of awkwardness, or the absence of the *savoir faire*. Nothing was more difficult, he had already found, than to improve or influence his wife in any particular. But, after a long and painful reflection upon these matters, he was determined to risk her displeasure, and venture one more note of warning.

"It would be of great service to yourself, as well as to me, Bertrade, if you would not speak with such incautious freedom of people about us," he said, upon a favorable opportunity.

"Indeed!" she rejoined, with flushing brow. "Has Miss Leah visited you with any more respectful suggestions? Or, has that long-nosed Zephaniah Wilkins been 'peaking' about here on a new track?"

"You do Miss Leah injustice to intimate that she ever said anything to me derogatory of you," replied Mr. Wellmont; "and it is unnecessary for any one to inform me of what is so evidently imprudent and injurious to our usefulness here, as are the remarks which you dispense so freely about you, without pausing to look on whom they fall. Then you must be

aware of a higher principle of accountability for thus using the reputations of people."

"What a speechment!" rejoined his wife; "quite in the vein hypocalorum!"

"In the vein of sincerity and seriousness," continued Mr. Wellmont.

"Must I come humbly to you, sir, and repeat what I have to say to get a right to speak before others, or shall I go to Zephaniah Wilkins?"

"I deal in no pragmatic sanctions, or anything of the kind, as you well know, Bertrade," said Mr. Wellmont.

"You might as well deal in Greek to me," said Mrs. Wellmont, in a very low voice, not designed for her husband's ear.

"If I know myself at all," continued Mr. Wellmont, "I am no tyrant to any one. I would sooner die than prove myself such an infliction to my wife, of all others. But, in all kindness, I must warn you of the consequences of this imprudence."

"Must!" retorted Mrs. Wellmont, ironically; "I am thinking you will get a great reward for your pains!" She now seated herself at her piano, and began playing a quick-step with great spirit; but, suddenly breaking off and turning about to confront her husband, said, "Is there anything more, sir, upon which your soul is laboring on my account? If so, let it be told now, once for all; for I have also to say, with no less dignity than your own, that I will not submit to so much censure upon my actions!"

"Yes, there is something more, Bertrade," answered Mr. Wellmont; "your persisting in riding horseback. While your company from the city remained, I forbore to interfere. But now it is my duty to tell you —"

"This is beyond endurance!" interrupted Mrs. Wellmont. "Be assured I shall not take any notice of such squeamishness. Indeed, I have been advised by my own friends not to sacrifice everything because I have been so unfortunate as to marry a minister."

Mr. Wellmont said no more, but retired by himself to prepare for a prayer meeting which was appointed for the evening.

"Surely," he said, as he seated himself before his Bible, "the preparation of the heart of man is from the Lord; else, with so many hindrances, I should utterly fail. But, let my cry be ever, as was that of the crusaders of old to the Holy Land — 'God wills it!'"

How often does man respond "God wills it!" to the afflictions which are the natural result of his own previous wilfulness, and thus shield himself from responsibility!

Mrs. Wellmont was so much vexed at these reproofs of her husband, that she could find no relief for her perturbation until she sat down and wrote a letter to her cousin Frank, a confidential beau of many years' standing, detailing the privations, provocations, and all the other aggravations of her lot as the wife of a country minister, concluding by a half-score of tender regrets that she had so unwisely placed herself in such a situation. Having thus partially relieved her mind,



she put on one of her equestrian suits, and, selecting a bridle she had been recently embroidering, went to the stable to mount Hagar for a horseback ride. As she rode down the yard, she looked up, and, perceiving her husband at the study window, with a defiant toss of her head galloped away with unusual animation.

Mr. Wellmont could scarcely resist the magnetism of so much impertinence, although in the very fervor of an exposition of a chapter of the Acts. With a bitter smile, he said to himself—not exactly anything so unclerical as “*Let her slide!*” but, instead, a line from Homer,—

“Yet, if the gods demand her, *let her sail!*”

At the first turn of the street Mrs. Wellmont encountered Zephaniah Wilkins. She quickly drew up, and motioned him to her side. With a look of mysterious solemnity she said, “See here! they say there is a menagerie over in Birhampton. Do you think they have anything there that attracts so much attention as I do here, on horseback?”

Before he had time to think of an answer, she had swept by, leaving him only the satisfaction of gazing after her retreating figure.

“If that woman were only *my* wife,” he muttered, with acerbity, “I would train her so that she should not be seen against my will more than once!”

A pity that all refractory women could not be “trained” by such men as Zephaniah Wilkins!

Dashing up to the post-office, Mrs. Wellmont threw her

letter within the open door, and requested a boy who stood there to put it in the mail. Never did she attract more notice than now, as she rode through the village. On all sides she saw in secret gratification, with half an eye, the people pausing to gaze after her. In consonance with her feelings, she carried herself regally, permitting a few long curls, that had escaped from her jaunty cap, to float unconfined over her shoulders, pushing her veil aside so that it floated attractively in the breeze, and flourishing her dainty whip with a hand encased neatly in a glove of rose-colored kid. From her variety of riding dresses she had selected for this time a black velvet skirt, with a bodice of white satin, lined and deeply trimmed with ermine, which all contrasted effectively with the milk-white Hagar.

As she passed the house of Father Shaw, the horse turned to stop at the old home, upon which she received a smart hint to proceed, and obeyed in high spirit. Miss Leah, who was sitting at one of the front windows and saw it all, lifted her hands in unmitigated horror, exclaiming in a jeremiade upon the degeneracy of the times. In the door of his shop her father stood and shook his head decidedly, while he said, "It won't do! Mr. Wellmont preaches well,—is a real good man every way in the world,—but he must take that ere woman off to the city; for it looks as bad here to see such things, as it did to John when he see a woman set on a beast full of names of blasphemy, and having seven heads and ten horns."

Onward, in triumph and indifference, proceeded the subject

of these various comments, till she had quite left the village. Coming at length into a strip of road more solitary than that over which she had passed, she slackened the speed of Hagar, and soon became absorbed in her own reflections. Nothing can be truer to the real character of a person than his secret thoughts, undisturbed by outward impressions, whether they be heart communings upon one's own bed, or upon horseback, as was the position of Mrs. Wellmont. She was recalling some of the brilliant hours of her past life, when triumphs had clustered thickly about her like diamonds in the crown of a queen; the hearts she had broken, like glass goblets shivered in a challenge; the lady rivals she had crushed, like roses robbed of their bright leaves, one after another, and then thrown down, to be trampled by careless steps and forgotten in the earth.

"After all," she said, "I threw myself away on a poor country minister! I, with all my beauty, fashion, and wealth! How it happened I can scarcely understand. At first sight, I admired him. There was something about his hair, fine blue eyes, and musical voice, so different from the beaux who usually paid me homage, I was fascinated. Then, too, I was foolish enough to regard his position as a minister with pride; but I little dreamed what all that signified. His manifest polished politeness, which I can now see was the result of indifference, piqued and interested me, so that I was fain to appear entirely different from myself to please him. I affected seriousness, wisdom, and every sort of nonsense; and now, when I see that he never really cared a fig for me,—

and it is an impossible thing that he ever should, — I get my full pay for all my deception. No wonder some of my friends said there never was a more unsuitable match than mine. I have bound my once free life with inevitable chains, — not of gold, that would be enduring, but of rusty, grating iron, — and they gall me to the heart.”

The horse had now reached a part of the way which was shaded heavily on either side by a dense and lofty wood. Through this Mrs. Wellmont had often rode; but never before had it struck her with such a sense of loneliness. The road ran in a straight direction for some distance ahead, so that she could look forward and see the hills and meadow lands beyond the wood, illumined by the golden light of the setting sun; but this more cheerful prospect failed to relieve the uncomfortable impression of density which was shed from the dark old trees around her. The slightest rustle among the underbrush, or the motion of a squirrel along the tree-trunks, disturbed her so much, that a cold, shuddering awe crept over her soul.

“ When the sun sets, shadows, that showed at noon  
But small, appear most long and terrible;  
So, when we think fate hovers o’er our heads,  
Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds;  
Owls, ravens, crickets, seem the watch of death;  
Echoes, the very leaving of a voice,  
Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves.”

An indefinable impression of evil brooded over Mrs. Wellmont, and, urging Hagar to proceed, she said to herself,

scarcely daring to look within the trees, lest she might see something to startle her anew, "How foolish in me to come so far alone to-night! but I dare not go back through this gloomy way now." The woods were nearly cleared, and she formed a resolution to return by another and more open road, when suddenly Hagar stopped fully, and, raising her ears, breathed furiously, refusing to proceed.

Mrs. Wellmont looked hurriedly on either side of the way to discover the cause, but nothing unusual could be seen. Had Hagar partaken of her fear without cause? She would urge her on, and inspire her with new courage. She spoke to her with spirit, and applied the whip. At the same moment, glancing ahead, she saw — it was something past her knowledge — a monster, white and awful, just emerging into view along the road!

An overmastering fear smote her to the heart. The danger of her situation, alone in that solitary spot, unknowing whither to turn for aid, she comprehended at once. Hagar, trembling violently, now turned backward in the direction she had come, and started off at alarming speed. Perceiving the imminent risk of falling from her seat, Mrs. Wellmont clung convulsively to the neck of the horse, too much overcome with affright to think of any other expedient for her safety. Soon approaching a descent, steep and circuitous, in an increasing sense of peril, she tightened her grasp, and made a faint effort to regain her control. But this only inspired Hagar to new exertions. Downward furiously they were dashing over the pebbles, which, under the sharp foot-fall, seemed sud-

denly changed to a path of fire, when the horse stumbled and fell headlong.

Swifter than light Mrs. Wellmont's last recollection came, that she had been thrown to the ground, and was dying.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CHANGES.

THAT evening, the people of the village of Waterbury beheld a long train of singular wagons approaching, preceded by an elephant, under a white cover, and guided by the keeper.

“When, behold! a sudden sandquake—and between the earth and moon

Rose a mighty host of shadows, as from out some dim lagoon :  
Then our coursers gasped with terror, and a thrill shook every man,  
And the cry was Allah Akbar ! ’t is the Spectre Caravan !”

With less fear, but with scarcely less astonishment, did many of the villagers behold the menagerie, some of the features of which looked not far from spectral, in the white shrouds of tent cloths, and the solemn progress of the procession. As the train approached, one of the wagons, drawn by eight ponies, attracted especial attention. Within this, it was surmised by the curious spectators, was something more precious and wonderful than all ; for two of the keepers sat in the foremost part, and held some object with evident solicitude and care. Just behind, in the rear of this wagon, was

a high cage of monkeys, covered, but not sufficiently to prevent the discovery of their faces from various small apertures. Many of the people left their places of business for observation, while the children crowded on either side, divided between awe and merriment at the marvellous spectacle. The strangers were closely surrounded, till they halted at the hotel. Here one of the keepers informed the landlord that they carried with them a lady, whom they had taken up by the way, insensible, if not dead. She had been thrown from a horse, they said, which had taken fright at the sight of the elephant; and, after running with violence, had fallen so as to be killed immediately. Concluding that the lady came from that direction, they had brought her thus far.

Eager and fearful was now the investigation of the identity of this lady. But it did not require a second glance to discern that she was none other than Mrs. Wellmont.

The sensations of the people, at this singular discovery, are better imagined than described; or, in the language of story-tellers from the time of the father of anecdotes, they "beggared description." Mrs. Wellmont was immediately conveyed to her home, and placed in charge of Dr. Humphrey, while a messenger was despatched to summon her husband, who had just entered the prayer meeting in the vestry of the church. Mr. Wellmont came with a heart full of unspeakable emotion. After inquiring minutely about the circumstances connected with the event, he said, within himself, "I can but exclaim, as the soldier said to Marius, when he was struck, 'Behold the sword which thyself has



forged!' I knew that such sentiments as she entertained towards this people, and the want of a sense of responsibility for her example which she manifested, were bringing her swiftly toward calamity; for nothing is truer than 'a haughty spirit goeth before a fall.'"

His subsequent reflections, however, affected himself most poignantly; for, to one constituted like him, with so much of the sense of propriety, such a remarkable *contre-temps* seemed to him nothing short of positive disgrace. With these feelings, how could he stand in the pulpit on the Lord's day, and again address his congregation, in whose thought he believed the adventure of his wife would be ever present?

It was ascertained that Mrs. Wellmont had not been seriously injured; but, in the opinion of Dr. Humphrey, the nature of her injuries would oblige her to be an invalid for some time. Some manifestations of sympathy were offered; but, for the most part, they were rather ambiguous. Mrs. Wellmont's very few particular friends regarded it unpopular now to be actively upon a side which was battered with so much ridicule. "When thou doest well by thyself, all men will praise thee," says the proverb; and it is equally true of one phase of human nature, that, when one does ill by one's self, all will unite in condemnation. Many were so unfeeling as to speak very freely of the affair; and it became a current saying among some of the people that Mrs. Wellmont had at last created as much sensation as even she could desire; having rode through the village with an elephant in the van, and monkeys in the rear!

Zephaniah Wilkins appeared to derive a triumphant satisfaction from this state of things, for Mrs. Wellmont had never been under his patronage; and he lost no time in bringing these remarks to the knowledge of Mr. Wellmont.

Some men in Mr. Wellmont's situation would have concealed their chagrin under the guise of indifference, or a calm resignation. But the more he thought of it, the more keenly did he suffer, till his imagination was continually haunted by the picture of his wife's misadventure, as she thus became the compassion of all, and the jest of many. On the succeeding Sabbath he was too ill to preach, and his pulpit was supplied by one of those preachers who hold themselves in readiness to meet the exigences of their fellow laborers.

Mrs. Wellmont would have suffered for the want of friendly attentions at this period, had it not been for Miss Leah. That lady, whom Mrs. Wellmont had so often stigmatized as "the stiff old maid," now proved her best and most generous friend, — generous in truth, because she aided her efficiently with her own personal efforts. At first, Miss Leah offered her attentions with cautious hesitation; but when she found that she was indispensably useful, she volunteered to spend the greater portion of every day with Mrs. Wellmont, contributing to her comfort in numberless ways. At the same time she continued her charge of her father's house as before, doing all so nicely and thoroughly, by extra and systematic effort, that Mrs. Wellmont could not have supposed such capability possible, had she not resorted to the idea that "Miss Leah had always been used to work as much as a servant."

Among the people who called upon Mrs. Wellmont in her convalescence, was her cousin, Mr. Swinton.

"We read," said Mr. Swinton, in one of his characteristic flourishes, "that when Venus heard that Adonis was mortally wounded, she hurried to his assistance; and, in her haste, her foot was wounded by a rose-bush, the flowers of which, formerly white, from that time took the color of blood. When she reached the spot, she found him lifeless on the grass; and, to alleviate her grief, and preserve his memory, she transformed him into an anemone! Now, my dear Bertrade, with a slight change, — as, for instance, instead of Venus your humble servant, and in place of Adonis yourself, — though not quite mortally wounded, this little mythological episode is somewhat to the present point. I find, however, that you are already transformed into a snow-white lily; for nothing so much does the extreme pallor of your face resemble; though I am reminded of the exclamation in Coleridge's *Christabel* :

' Her face, O call it pure, not pale ! ' "

"I appeal to your ministerial candor, if Mr. Wellmont look not most like the lily pale, with a shade of the gosling-green of melancholy," rejoined Mrs. Wellmont.

"He is certainly rather unearthly-looking, at present, and —"

"You would say of me," interrupted Mr. Wellmont, with a faint attempt at humor, "as a French satirist said of Chamfort, 'He is nothing more than a sprig of lily grafted on a poppy-head !'"

"O, no, my dear sir, you are only inhaling the essence of sympathy—that's all; you will revive presently," said the man of roses.

"Such a pity I ever came to this horrid country place!" exclaimed Mrs. Wellmont, impatiently, twisting the satin loops of her wrapper. "In the time I have been here I have met with all sorts of perplexities; and now I positively aver I will not remain here. I will go home as soon as I am able."

"No danger of not leaving here; for the people are not less anxious to have us go," replied her husband.

"You mistake entirely," observed Mr. Swinton. "From my personal knowledge, I can testify you are very much beloved here."

"Yes, he is, by a few prosy, stupid ignoramuses, I dare say!" rejoined Mrs. Wellmont.

"Bertrade!" said Mr. Wellmont, with great seriousness, "I hoped your recent misfortune would have shown you the danger of judgment for idle words."

Mrs. Wellmont was upon the point of rejoining in high spirit, when Mr. Swinton interposed. "Come, my friends," said he, "I made this match, and I have, therefore, an interest that it shall end well."

"'T was a match unusually well tipped with phosphorus!" said Mrs. Wellmont.

"Exceedingly brilliant, I admit," rejoined Mr. Swinton, with a hearty laugh.

"And so very fiery, that I am in danger of getting my fingers burned," continued Mr. Wellmont, with a smile.

"Come, come!" said Mr. Swinton, "it's getting warm here; let us introduce a little of the oil of conciliation to heal the burns."

"Some of your *sweet* oil, perfumed with the attar of roses, would be agreeable just now," said Mrs. Wellmont.

"I wish I had, for your husband, some of that oil which, as the Psalmist says, 'maketh the face to shine,' he is looking so lugubrious," rejoined Mr. Swinton.

"I would prefer," said Mr. Wellmont, "that Bertrade would learn to regard the reproof of the righteous, as did the Psalmist when he called it 'an excellent oil which shall not break my head.'"

"I have come near breaking my neck already, and do not choose to run any more risks," retorted Mrs. Wellmont.

"I shall certainly be obliged to take my departure," observed Mr. Swinton, at this juncture.

"In constant danger of an explosion, are you not?" asked Mr. Wellmont, who had rallied his spirits considerably.

"O, no! I have no fears of anything either of you can say; but I must confess, my dear friends, the responsibility of preserving peace here is momentarily becoming heavier."

"Since you are bold enough to intimate that you have no apprehension of the effect of our words," said Mr. Wellmont, "I must say that you, Mr. Swinton, remind me of a flea—"

"A flea!" interrupted Mr. Swinton; "I, a minister of

the Gospel, remind you, a minister of the Gospel, of a *flea*! O, degenerate!"

"What would the people say," observed Mrs. Wellmont, "could they hear you two ministers now? I guess they would shorten their long faces a trifle!"

"I was about to say," resumed Mr. Wellmont, "that Latreille mentions a flea who dragged a silver cannon on wheels that was twenty-four times its own weight. This cannon was charged with powder and fired, without the flea manifesting the least alarm. And this was brought to my mind by your alleged burden of responsibility in our behalf, and yet not confessing alarm at our random shots."

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Mrs. Wellmont; "well may you blame me for 'idle words'!"

"We gentlemen never allow our wives the liberty we take ourselves," said Mr. Swinton; "for instance, I should not allow my wife to kiss another man, but I shall take the liberty of kissing you, Bertrade, now that I am about to leave."

The brow of Mr. Wellmont suddenly flushed now; there was a sacredness about the idea of his wife which he could not have thus desecrated without displeasure. He looked upon her with secret curiosity, to observe how she received such familiarity. "Mr. Swinton is her cousin, but what matters that?" he thought.

Mr. Wellmont was not a man who held kissing a common article of exchange.

"By the way, cousin," said Mrs. Wellmont, "how is your

wife getting on now? I had almost forgotten to inquire for her."

"She is about as ever; absorbed with her housekeeping and babies," he said.

"Has she improved upon that old melancholy at all? I used to think, when I was at your house, it made her dull," continued Mrs. Wellmont.

"I can't say as she has improved in anything," said Mr. Swinton, affecting to joke; "she is more nervous than ever, and I can scarcely look at her without the tears coming to my eyes. I think I shall shut up house in the spring, and let her go home to her father's for a while, with the children."

"And you will board in blessed independence?" said Mrs. Wellmont, laughing.

"Exactly. But, in the language of another," said Mr. Swinton, turning toward Mr. Wellmont, "may I taste the nectar of her lip?"

"I leave her at perfect liberty," said Mr. Wellmont, coldly.

"For the first time!" observed Mrs. Wellmont.

"You don't intend to say, Bertrade," said Mr. Swinton, "that this kiss will be for the first time! You would not try to make your husband believe that!"

"Worse and worse!" thought Mr. Wellmont.

His wife laughed violently. "What a funny man!" she exclaimed.

"Well, I *must* go," said Mr. Swinton, rising suddenly, and putting his arm about Mrs. Wellmont, while he kissed her.

With another flourish, which he intended for a closing address, he bowed himself out. Mr. Wellmont also left the room, but his countenance expressed very different emotions from that of Mr. Swinton.

Shortly after this, Mrs. Wellmont observed to her husband that she had a serious subject upon her mind, which troubled her very much, and she would like his advice. Such words from the lips of his wife astonished Mr. Wellmont. He half surmised that her accident had affected her brain. A possibility that this disciplinary period might effect some beneficial change in her manner of feeling was also suggested to him. His speculations were soon terminated by Mrs. Wellmont saying, "I have been thinking where is the best spot in which to bury poor Hagar. She must have a suitable grave."

Mr. Wellmont was disappointed, but, not wishing to be always censorious, he answered, "Perhaps she might be interred at the foot of the garden, under the walnut trees by the summer house. The noble horse of the Cid was buried under the trees before the convent in which were his master's remains."

Mrs. Wellmont never could agree with her husband; so she determined that Hagar should be laid, next day, in a shady plat by the spring, upon the other side of the garden.

Within the following week, Mr. Wellmont left the village for an indefinite absence, the object of which no one, not even Zephaniah Wilkins, precisely knew, though it was surmised that he had gone to obtain another situation. He had thought of Mr. Phanuel, who was now residing in the city of L—,



and to him was his destination directed. Mr. Phanuel received him with cordiality, — as much, in fact, as he was capable of showing any man, — heard the relation of his troubles, and set himself about at once to devise some way for his assistance. After some consideration, he said, “I think I can get you introduced to a church here in the city, which at this time is destitute of a pastor. It is not exactly the church for you, but I know of no better at present.”

“Of what kind of people is it composed?” inquired Mr. Wellmont.

“It is a new church, made up of a variety of elements, like all churches. They have never agreed upon a pastor since their organization, about a year since. But, if they can be brought to unite upon such a man as you, I think they might become powerful in time.”

“I must congratulate you,” said Mr. Wellmont, at the conclusion of their conversation upon this matter, “upon your present home, so well appointed in all respects. It must be very pleasant to your wife and family, as well as to yourself.”

“I supposed you already knew that my wife no longer lives with me,” said Mr. Phanuel.

Mr. Wellmont started with surprise.

“Impossible!” he exclaimed, upon the impulse of the moment.

“Not at all,” responded Mr. Phanuel, decidedly. “It was not very fitting to bring such a woman into this sphere,” he added, with a sneer.

"I thought Mrs. Phanuel a most excellent person, sir," said Mr. Wellmont, in greater surprise.

"People are often deceived about these things," continued Mr. Phanuel. "That she was a most ordinary woman you must have seen."

Mr. Wellmont had opened his lips in remonstrance; but Mr. Phanuel waved his hand impatiently, and went on.

"My relations know her well, and they all hate her. I, too, know something of her, it is to be presumed, and I say that I have no idea of her being around in my sight longer. I am tired of her humdrum, plain ways. She is old-fashioned and ugly. Then, too, if she is at the head of my house, good heavens! what would the world here think of me?"

Mr. Wellmont sighed heavily, and the perspiration suddenly started to his brow.

"Her character has been irreproachable, has it not?" he inquired, cautiously.

"I suppose so," answered Mr. Phanuel, reluctantly; "but her goodness is a sort that is in no danger of being tempted."

He stopped that he might laugh, loudly, but coldly, as hail-stones sound when they strike against the window-pane.

"Faugh!" he added, "she's just the sort that's called good, merely because they an't capable of getting any higher name."

"Goodness is never to be underrated," commented Mr. Wellmont, in a low voice.

"Every man is the best able to judge of what he is about,"

said Mr. Phanuel ; "and, when I am once decided in a course of action, I am apt to go forward without let or hindrance. But we will waive this subject, which is not agreeable to me, if you please," he added.

"Do you recollect a lady whom you met once at my house in Waterbury, — the one you compared to an author — George Dust, or some such name?" inquired Mr. Phanuel, to change the topic.

"I remember one of your visitors reminded me of an authoress who goes by the name of George Sand," replied Mr. Wellmont.

"That's the lady," said Mr. Phanuel ; "she resides next door to us, and is in here frequently. A splendid woman!"

Mr. Wellmont was silent. What words could he find to say? Certainly not the words which were uppermost in his heart, to a man who had always conducted toward him so munificently, and had just given a new proof of his friendship. Mr. Phanuel next drew from his pocket a large roll of bank-bills, and commenced counting from them aloud, till he had reached the number of one hundred.

"There," said he, offering the sum to Mr. Wellmont, "take that as a free gift from an old friend. You will require some money to spend here in the city, and I am one who believes in remembering the ministers of God."

Mr. Wellmont at first refused, with acknowledgments ; but, on being urged, he pocketed the money, and whatever reproofs he felt toward the man, together.

"You will make my house your home during your stay

here," concluded Mr. Phaniel. "My carriage shall be at your service at any time."

By means of Mr. Phaniel's influence Mr. Wellmont was invited to preach on the following Sabbath at the New Stone Church, as it was called. All the noblest energies of his soul were summoned to the effort, and he succeeded in bringing forth a strength of material and beauty of expression that convinced all of his resources, and won entire approbation. He was immediately engaged to preach for them on the two succeeding Sabbaths, at the expiration of which time, he gave such universal satisfaction, that he received an unanimous invitation to settle over them as their pastor.

The call was accepted with eagerness, for Mr. Wellmont now saw a prospect of an honorable field of labor in a city parish, — a goal to which he had been aiming from his entrance into the ministry. One Sabbath was reserved on which to preach his last discourse in Waterbury, pursuant to requesting a dismissal of that church and society. A farewell sermon, properly so called, he did not deliver; that kind of climacteric effort did not harmonize with his ideas of a minister's departure from a place which he had respected and loved. He did not wish to recapitulate what he had done, thus to suggest to the people what he had left undone; he had no reproofs to administer for duty neglected, or improperly performed; nor careful intimations of what should be their future course with another minister.

His sermon was listened to with universal grief and regret, for Mr. Wellmont had been unusually esteemed in Waterbury;

and, had it not been for the numerous foibles of his wife, they would have been almost inconsolable. As it was, his request for a dismissal was granted without a remonstrance, although several took occasion to tell Mr. Wellmont, emphatically, that no one had ever expressed dissatisfaction with him, and it was with unfeigned sorrow they contemplated the idea of a separation. He thanked them, and, at the last, loved his people far better than he had at first anticipated was possible.

But it was with pleasant anticipations he thought of his new people, so much superior, in all respects, he believed, to those with whom he had been associated in Waterbury.

"I shall be no more troubled with many annoyances incident to the position of a country pastor," he reflected. "Everything in future will be on a broader plan."

Upon the sale of his residence, Mr. Wellmont made a discovery very important to him — that it was not his own, for which to receive payment. His wife's father appeared at this juncture, and claimed the whole value received, notwithstanding he had always understood it was a gift to them. No legal conveyance ran in his name; and Mr. Wellmont could make no appeal, for had he not received the use of the place from the time of its purchase? He had used his salary as fast as received, and sometimes in advance, to meet the expenses of his wife's extravagant housekeeping and other demands; and he had been obliged to use the gift of Mr. Phaniel in the liquidation of a long-standing debt. Consequently he found himself at this time in a very straitened condition. The

new parish had agreed to give him a moderate salary for the first year; at the conclusion of which, if possible, they were to make an addition of a couple of hundred dollars. They could not afford to give as much as many of the parishes in the city, they said, because the expenses of their beginning, the past year, had been heavy to meet. Nothing was said, however, by the church committee about the payment of any portion of his salary till the expiration of the first six months; and Mr. Wellmont, secretly condemning the meagre salaries which ministers receive, wrote to his mother to ask her to loan him a small sum of her own slender income, instead of sending her a remittance for former obligations, as he had fondly hoped. To do this was exceedingly painful for him; but he saw no alternative, for he could not think of taxing Mr. Phanuel's generosity further, and to sell any of his wife's furniture would be impossible. At the conclusion of the residence in Waterbury, Mrs. Wellmont returned with her father to visit her former home, and recruit her health and spirits; and Mr. Wellmont was invited, most opportunely, by Mr. Phanuel, to reside with him until his wife should be able to join him in the establishment of a new house.

The days which Mr. Wellmont spent at this period in Mr. Phanuel's family were not all sunshine, although they had begun auspiciously. Little Bessie, the youngest child, had always been a prime favorite with him; and now, on every opportunity, she made no scruple of pouring her childish griefs into his ear. "I want my dear mamma!" was her con-

tinual request in private; for she had learned, by a bitter experience, that these words must never be spoken in presence of her father. The two other children at home were older, and had naturally imbibed more of the spirit of their father; they were engrossed with new occupations and pleasures of town life; they had also been carefully moulded, by relatives unfriendly to their mother, to believe all that their father said against her. Ah! woe to relatives who would poison the hearts of children with hatred for their own, best-beloved parent, — the mother who has borne them upon her heart through years of care, and tears, and pain!

One evening, when Mr. Phanuel had gone out, Mr. Wellmont was surprised in the library by the sudden appearance of little Bessie, in her nightcap and gown, exclaiming, in the most joyful manner :

“Dear mamma has come! O! don’t you think! dear mamma has come! Do come and see her!” She danced about, shouting and clapping her little hands, with every evidence of childish joy; but, suddenly recollecting herself, she ran off, saying, “O, I am so glad!”

Mr. Wellmont, very much astonished at this demonstration, went out of the room into the adjoining parlor, where he stood undecided what course to pursue. In another moment, Pierson, Mr. Phanuel’s oldest child, a lad of a dozen years, entered, and said :

“Mrs. Phanuel is here, sir! Will you go and order her to leave this house? My father is out, and something must be done.”

"Is it possible I hear aright?" exclaimed Mr. Wellmont. "Can you speak thus of your own mother, who has given you birth, nursed you upon her bosom, and devoted herself to you with the most self-sacrificing affection?"

At this reproof the boy's face flushed with anger.

"My father has taught me how to speak, sir," he replied.

At this juncture a most piercing shriek fell upon their ears, succeeded by loud cries of supplication, proceeding from one of the upper apartments of the house. On reaching the nursery, Mr. Wellmont beheld Mrs. Phanuel kneeling upon the floor, and clasping Bessie frantically to her heart, while the housekeeper was endeavoring to force the child from the mother's arms. A sister of Bessie was standing aside, and ejaculating passionately to Bessie to "come away from that woman in a moment."

"Anna!" spoke Mrs. Phanuel, with a voice of suppressed but mastering emotion. "Is this all a dream? Is it possible you have so soon learned to despise your mother? You will live to look back upon this moment with repentance. My son," continued the mother, on seeing Pierson enter the room, "come to me. *You* surely have not forgotten how well you loved your mother!"

But he stood proudly aloof, looking down upon the form of his mother unmoved.

"O, God!" cried Mrs. Phanuel, "they have all learned to scorn me! They all desert me now, but this lamb of my bosom! She shall never leave me!"

"Dear mamma," responded little Bessie, while she kissed



her mother, fondly, "I want to go home with you, and not stay any more in this great, noisy place. I want to go where I can sleep with you every night, and have you hold my hand on your bosom, just as you used to. Won't it be nice?"

"You shall live with me always, dear child!" replied the mother, embracing her again and again. "O, I thank Heaven that one has not been taught to hate me!" she added, fervently.

A heavy voice was now heard in the hall below, and a hurried tread upon the stairs. Mr. Phanuel brushed by Mr. Wellmont, who stood just without the door, and, in a tone of awful anger, said, "Woman! why are you here? Begone, this moment, or I shall send for help to compel you to go!"

Thus they remained for a moment, each looking upon the other, while all the children began to cry aloud. Little Bessie clasped her arms about her mother's neck, saying, "You won't go, dear mamma, till I get ready to go with you, will you?"

"Mr. Phanuel! — my husband!" said Mrs. Phanuel, at length, with great effort, "tell me how I have done wrong, if wrong I have done. In all the time I have lived with you I have tried to do the best in my power. Have I not ever been a faithful, humble wife to you, and a devoted mother to our children in sickness and health?"

"Dear, dear mother!" now cried Anna, relenting at the sight of her mother's woe, and throwing herself upon her knees before her, "I do pity you!"

"Anna!" spoke her father, sternly, "leave this room!"

And you, Pierson, leave! Mrs. Burt," turning to the housekeeper, "take Bessie away with you!"

"I can't, sir!" replied the housekeeper; "I've been trying some time, and she won't let Bessie go!"

"Won't!" exclaimed Mr. Phanuel, at the same time going to his wife, and with one effort wrenching the child from her grasp.

The shrieks of little Bessie as she was carried out filled all the house. The mother sat silent and motionless as a statue, clasping her hands strongly over her heart, as if to shut down its throbs of agony. Mr. Wellmont now advanced within the room, faintly hoping his presence would be of some avail in quelling this fearful tempest of passion. Perceiving him for the first time, Mrs. Phanuel stretched forth her hands imploringly. Her lips moved, but no word was heard.

"I trust," said Mr. Wellmont, looking with constraint towards Mr. Phanuel, and then to his wife, "that peace may yet be reëstablished between you. Consider, for a moment, the fearful responsibility you are taking upon yourself. 'What God has joined together let not man put asunder' has been pronounced over you in the presence of God and of witnesses. You have lived together for years, and children have been born unto you —"

"I make no pretensions to religion," interrupted Mr. Phanuel; "neither do I expect advice, unless I ask it."

"I judge no man," resumed Mr. Wellmont; "but I here lift my voice against what appears to be this great sin before God. I wash my hands of any countenance of it henceforth

and forever. I must do it." There were burning tears upon his pale cheeks, and his whole frame trembled with emotion.

"Have I not always been a firm friend to you?" asked Mr. Phanuel.

"You have," replied Mr. Wellmont; "but that must not mislead me into unjust judgment against the innocent and oppressed."

"The innocent and oppressed!" retorted Mr. Phanuel, scornfully. But he had not finished speaking when he perceived Mr. Wellmont draw back in apparent horror, and with a gesture direct his attention towards his wife.

A fearful change was marked upon the countenance of Mrs. Phanuel. Within her eye burned an unnatural fire, which showed at once that the calm, settled light of reason had gone out from her brain. A rigidity held her muscles, as if their last tension had been reached; and the beating of her heart was so violent that every pulsation shook her whole frame.

Nothing is more awe-inspiring, more thoroughly saddening, than the eye in which madness is seen. It is like looking upon a lake of burning naphtha in comparison with a well of clear, cold, and still water. All law which has had power, all government save the impulse of a direct will, is put away; and there can be no common ground of action upon which the least certainty may be reposed. The eye of the crazed wife burned upon Mr. Phanuel now, without a transfer of its glance for an instant. For the first time did the man of iron heart quail before woman!

How could he look upon that eye and not feel his heart fail within him? — for therein he read the great wrongs of the past with the characters all reversed, and written, as it were, with a pen of fire upon stone. He could not look long; and he stood there motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the floor, as was his habit when lost in calculation. At length he spoke, as if falling upon a favorable expedient:

“Come, Eliza, come from this room, and Mrs. Burt shall show you where you can get some rest till morning.” He knew that the voice of command was no longer of avail.

She did not move, but remained like a statue in her kneeling position, with her hands still clasped over her heart.

“If you will do this, you need not leave here,” he continued, calculating the chances of his success. She gave no heed.

“Or you may leave in the morning, and Bessie shall go with you. *Bessie shall go with you*,” he repeated, to gain her attention. He had struck the right chord now. The name of her darling child was more potent over the broken heart and brain than aught else. Drooping her eyelashes, she arose listlessly, and suffered herself to be conducted whither Mr. Phaniel directed.

A poorly furnished room in the attic story, with no window but a sky-light, was assigned for her reception; the door of which Mr. Phaniel locked without, placing the key in his own charge. He descended to the parlor, where clear burning waxen candles and a bright coal fire shed over the splendid furniture a luxurious glow. Mr. Wellmont stood at one of

the windows, behind the rich draperies, gazing abstractedly without upon the darkness thick and black.

"It is a dreary night," observed Mr. Phanuel, as he drew up a large chair for himself before the fire.

Mr. Wellmont thought of the attic chamber overhead, and was too much overcome to reply. Mr. Phanuel transferred his attention to the evening paper. It proved, in fact, a dreary night, abroad and within. The cold of winter had commenced, and a storm was gathering in the sky. There was no moon, nor were stars visible, and the winds were wild and mournful. Sleep was a stranger to the inmates of the house through the long hours; for at intervals, until morning, were heard from the lonely attic chamber the most piercing shrieks of despair, such as one seldom hears in a life. In the morning it rained; but Mr. Phanuel ordered a close carriage and swift horses to his door, and went for his wife, accompanied by Mr. Wellmont.

On opening the door they found the room was empty. It was as silent and undisturbed, save a singular arrangement of chairs in the centre, as though no one had been within it for a week. No trace of Mrs. Phanuel was found.

A second thought, however, convinced Mr. Phanuel that escape was impossible save by the sky-light, which the arrangement of the chairs suggested. By introducing a portable staircase from an adjoining closet, he was enabled to lift the window and look without.

"Great heavens!" he said, under his breath, "there she is

on the extremity of the roof!" And he looked down upon Mr. Wellmont, aghast.

Apparently regardless of danger, she sat with her head uncovered, her hair wetted through by the rain, and streaming in the air unconfined, and with a sheet wound carelessly about her shoulders. She was looking away through the storm, and singing a fragment of "Home, sweet home," in a voice which would have softened a heart of adamant to tears.

"Eliza!" said Mr. Phanuel, "come here, quickly, for Heaven's sake!"

"I shall never come!" she answered, looking steadfastly away, as if waiting. "I am going to fly off to the clouds as soon as I have made an end of singing!"

She then sang softly, and with a clear sweetness:

"A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,  
Which, seek through the world, is not met with elsewhere."

"What can be done?" inquired Mr. Phanuel of Mr. Wellmont, impatiently, contemplating the thwarting of his scheme. "To advance would be perilous. Perhaps we had better leave her to descend at her own will."

"I have got my mantle all ready," she continued, to appearance entirely absorbed in herself. Folding the sheet more closely about her, she rose suddenly to her feet, and ran lightly along the steep roof to the opposite edge. Mr. Wellmont closed his eyes to shut out the fearful scene. He

expected momentarily to miss her from that dangerous spot.

"See! the chariot of fire is coming!" she now exclaimed, pointing afar. "Is Bessie ready? Dear lamb! she will go home with me, at last!"

"We cannot let Bessie go out there in the rain," now spoke Mr. Wellmont, struck with a new hope; "she would take cold, and be ill."

"Would she?" said Mrs. Phanuel, for the first time attentive to them.

"Certainly," added Mr. Phanuel. "If you will come down into the house, you shall ride away from the street with Bessie."

"Well, then, I will go down," she said, submissively.

"Now, Mr. Wellmont," said Mr. Phanuel, aloud, when he had entered the attic, "just assist Mrs. Phanuel away." He motioned him to take her arm on one side, while he secured her on the other.

"Where is my darling?" inquired Mrs. Phanuel, when they had descended to the front hall, and she saw the coachman waiting.

Mr. Phanuel requested Mr. Wellmont to go for Bessie, and see that she was arrayed properly for a ride. Mr. Wellmont complied.

"O, I shall have her once more all to myself!" exclaimed the poor mother, while a ghastly smile for a moment lighted up her haggard features. "She shall rest on this bosom, she shall —" Her words were forcibly interrupted.

When Mr. Wellmont returned with Bessie, dressed in her riding hat and cloak, the carriage had gone from the door on its way to the lunatic asylum.

"Only a stratagem, after all," thought Mr. Wellmont, with bitterness; "he might at least have permitted her to have parted with Bessie."

But the disappointment to little Bessie, who had been told she was to go with her mother, was intense. Her pleas to see her "dear mamma" were heart-rending. She soon became so absorbed with grief, that nothing could divide her attention or alleviate her distress.

At last, her cries became so violent, a flow of blood came from her nose and mouth, and, utterly exhausted, she sank down in her nurse's arms and fell asleep.

Mr. Phaeuel, on his return, found Bessie very ill of a fever, and delirious. The most skilful physicians were summoned, and entreated by the father to spare the life of his child; for, with all his wonted sternness, his children were very dear to him, and the pet Bessie was especially beloved. The case was pronounced a critical one, and from the first but little hope was given of effecting a recovery. For days she lay contending with disease, again and again beseeching her father, in her childish plaint, to let her go with her "dear mamma."

"My hot head would feel so good up close to her neck, and she would kiss me and make me well!" she would cry. Sometimes she imagined herself in her old home, and talked lovingly of the birds, the flowers, and of her own dear little kittens in their basket under the primroses. Then she would think her



mother was coming to meet her, extending her little hands for an embrace. At such times her father was forced to leave the room, and it was now a question of doubt, if the past were again to come up, whether he would repeat the part he had heartlessly acted.

The presence of Mr. Wellmont seemed the only consolation left to the little sufferer, and whatever he told her she obeyed without a murmur.

The dreaded crisis, which was to decide the result of her illness, approached.

"She cannot, must not die!" said Mr. Phaniel, with the same air of authority with which he gave all his orders. "I have already planned a brilliant life for her; she is a beautiful child, and my youngest born."

"She is the Lord's, nevertheless," rejoined Mr. Wellmont; "the Giver hath a right to take her away, though it seems very grievous in our eyes."

"Pray for her life, sir," said Mr. Phaniel, almost sternly; "if it be true that the prayer of the righteous availeth much, spare no supplication in her behalf."

Mr. Phaniel could not now leave the room for a moment. All day he stood by the bed of his child, with fearful gloom, anticipating the hour which was to bring peace or agony.

She had lain for the last hours in insensibility, but with the coming of evening she revived, and seemed partially sensible of the presence of those about her.

With a sweet smile, looking upon her father, she said,

"Dear mamma will come again and kiss me, won't she?"

"She is better! She will live!" said Mr. Phaniel.

The physician, who was examining her attentively, shook his head; for he saw the unmistakable death-shadow settling over the little face.

"Impossible!" exclaimed her father, twining unconsciously her fair hair over his fingers; "she is certainly more like herself, is she not, Mr. Wellmont?"

"The expression of her eye is peculiar," he replied. Bending lower over her, he asked,

"Can you see me now, dear Bessie?"

"I can't! it is so dark here all at once!" she answered, raising her tiny hands to his face, and suffering them to fall about his neck.

"It is night, is n't it? Shall I say, 'Now I lay me'?"

"Yes, dear child, if you like. God hears you," said Mr. Wellmont, now taking both her hands in his own.

She began in her own natural voice of childish sweetness, but, soon becoming exhausted, her words sunk to a whisper, and she seemed to sleep. A few minutes later, a slight struggle passed over her face, and, waking with the cry; "Dear mamma! do come, take little Bessie!" she expired.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. LOOMEY.

THE parish of Waterbury did not hasten in the selection of a pastor to fill the vacancy made by the departure of Mr. Wellmont. One and another candidate presented himself and departed, without discovering a sign to detain him. But at length there came one who straightway impressed the people that he was not an ordinary man, or one with whom any could deal carelessly. The Rev. Mr. Loomey seemed the impersonation of dignity and solemnity; like some characters in fiction, who, under the author's pen, become abstract qualities, rather than pictures of human beings with passions for both good and evil.

Dean Swift, as witty as he was ecclesiastical, says, "Solemnity is the cover for a sot." A greater than Dean Swift calls those who disfigure their faces with this solemn sadness hypocrites. Some, however, are constitutionally solemn, and would seem utterly wanting in sympathy with the lively side of life. Such persons obtain a reputation for wisdom and respectability, and are generally much feared and respected. Among this latter class was numbered the Rev. Mr. Loomey,

upon his early presentation to Waterbury. He was not a young man, neither could he be properly called old, although he was so dignified that no one thought of asking him his age. His hair was yet a fresh brown, with occasional hues of gold ; but it was quite gone about the crown of his head, which was red and shining. His hair was cut close, and arranged so that his round head looked even rounder than it might otherwise have looked ; inclining to a curl, it would have given an impression of good-humor, had it not been for his unusually serious face. His countenance was decidedly florid, looking like a cloud behind which the sun is struggling to come out. His eyes passed for black, but they were a greenish gray, shaded with very dark lashes. But their full light was almost always concealed by spectacles, assisted by habitually falling eyelids. His mouth was the very acme of solemnity ; when he spoke it became a yawning grave of all earthliness, of all life's dearest hopes.

On ascending the pulpit for the first time, he came near falling upon his face, by reason of a false step. This was construed into a bad omen by certain observers.

The first sermon of Mr. Loomey was upon sin, its heinousness, and consequent judgment. The theory of Pope, that there is something venerable and oracular in unadorned gravity and brevity of expression, seemed to have entered largely into the formation of his style. But the sermon contained good doctrine and practical truth. Miss Leah found occasion to take notes more than ordinarily, and Mrs. Witherell wrote every moment which was not devoted to rapt admiration of

the speaker. The young people, for the most part, were held in perfect awe at the spectacle of such an amount of solemnity. His prayers were very long; but, as it was the custom of the people to remain sitting during that exercise, no unpleasant consequences ensued. A great contrast was Mr. Loomey to Mr. Wellmont, and not an unfavorable one to many of the people, especially the elderly portion, and those who had suffered indignities from Mrs. Wellmont.

"Just such a man as we need to influence our young people," remarked Deacon Dennis to Deacon Goodwin.

"Yes, no one can object to such a good man as Mr. Loomey evidently is," was the reply.

Consequently, Mr. Loomey was engaged to preach for several Sabbaths, and each succeeding Sabbath he impressed more and more with the weight of his character for dignity and solemnity.

Quite contrary to custom, Father Shaw refused to express his opinion of this minister; when interrogated, he said he would wait and see more, before he told what he thought. When the time came to decide in regard to inviting Mr. Loomey to the pastorate of Waterbury, it was generally agreed that he was the man for them; he had enjoyed experience in his vocation, and he seemed a man in all respects superior to the other candidates whom they had heard. What opposition really existed was withheld, on the principle that it was dangerous to oppose a man of such deep solemnity.

Mr. Loomey did not accept this call without considerable demur. He said he had several invitations to preach in other

places, where there were larger and more flourishing congregations. But finally he concluded to remain, as his health was not adequate to a more laborious field, provided the committee of business would add a couple of hundred dollars to the salary. There was some opposition to this; but, as the wealthier portion made no objections, the demand was met. Mr. Loomey had no wife. He informed those who mentioned the subject that he was never married, and should not marry. He should devote all his talents, time, and interest, to the people of his care. By many this was set down to his great advantage. They were in no danger of a pastor's wife, who might prove a drawback; and the young people generally thought a minister was much more agreeable if he were without a wife. After looking about the village thoroughly, Mr. Loomey decided to make his home with Mrs. Witherell, for the reason of the absence of children in the family. Mrs. Witherell, being very active in the affairs of the church and society in general, and also being on intimate terms with Zephaniah Wilkins, Mr. Loomey was not at a loss for any local knowledge, or other assistance, he required.

The watch-word of Mr. Loomey soon came out; it was a good word, embracing many good principles — Reform. It is also, like many other words, ambiguous, and capable of being labelled upon almost any parcel of sentiments and actions. First he began with minutiae. Upon the Sabbath succeeding his engagement to remain with them, he publicly requested the congregation to arise and remain standing during every prayer in the Lord's house.

"This sitting position," said he, "I consider very disrespectful to the Being whom we address, and to him who addresses the throne of grace in your behalf. You will, therefore, in future, arise and stand during the holy exercise of prayer. You have hitherto," he continued, "risen and turned your bodies to see those who take part in the singing of the sanctuary, — a practice which I consider very disorderly and worldly. I wish it hereafter to be discontinued."

"Well," said Father Shaw to Dr. Humphrey, at the close of that morning's exercise, "ef he allers prays as long as that are prayer was this mornin', I guess some of the heels will ache afore night like all natur. How pale and sunken-like the women looked when he gut over the world as far as Indy; and when he gut on ter Africa, I thought for sartin some on 'em would have gin out and dropp'd down."

"It is unfavorable to health to remain standing so long in one position," replied the doctor; "but I think we had better conform to his wishes, and not fall out by the way. It is but a small matter."

"I never cared northin' about gittin' up and seeip' the singers myself," Father Shaw went on, "but I kinder guess some of our folks will miss seein' and bein' seen. It's all the pay our singers git; and, ef they can't be looked at, it's kinder hard."

As might have been predicated of such a movement, a great many of the choir were offended; for it is always observable that those persons who have that most excellent gift of music are especially sensitive. This feeling was by no means allayed

on the following Sabbath. In the course of the long morning prayer, the congregation were aroused from their devotions, by the sudden cessation of words from Mr. Loomey. On looking up, they saw that his eyes were unclosed, and fastened with a look of solemn reproof in the direction of the choir. He stood thus for an awful interval of a moment, when he resumed his prayer. After the conclusion, he sat down and buried his face in his handkerchief, till the awe of the people began to subside into curiosity; then he arose slowly, and said his soul had been inexpressibly shocked by hearing, from some member of the choir, a whisper during prayer; and, when he had looked in that direction, a young woman had so far forgotten the respect due to the place and person as to smile! He hoped he should see nothing further of such indecorum; for it so distracted his thoughts from the sacred message he had to deliver, it was well nigh impossible for him to proceed.

It would have been better for Mr. Loomey if there had been in his congregation some such person as Sir Roger de Coverley, who was in the habit of doing such things in church as "to call out to one John Matthews, when he was kicking his heels for a diversion, not to disturb the congregation."

Mr. Loomey summoned strength, however, to announce his subject, which he said particularly concerned the female portion of his congregation. It was upon their apparel. He had noticed much vanity and vexation of spirit among the people, and he felt it his duty to preach against it. His text was this:



“In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon ; the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers ; the bonnets and head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings and nose-jewels ; the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins ; the glasses and the fine linen, and the hoods and the vails.”

At the conclusion of the reading of this text, there was a slight movement throughout the congregation. But the minister looked around with so much solemnity, the ladies, at least, subsided into gravity much sooner than seemed possible under the circumstances. As the gentlemen had felt that their purses and personal comfort were more or less sacrificed to the demands for feminine dress, they were curious, and predisposed to listen with attention to what might be said.

The sermon was divided under several heads. These also embraced subdivisions. Under the head of mourning attire, he spoke largely.

“It is often,” he said, “a mockery, these long black veils, and other garments of mourning, crape, and serge. The heart, beneath so much outward appearance of lamentation, is often silently content, or rejoicing at a death which leaves the person a recipient of new benefits in greater or less proportion. Away with pretences !” he cried, in exaltation ; “away with all pretences ! And the angels and glorified saints respond Amen and Amen !”

In this strain he continued till that part of his subject was exhausted ; every word of which inflicted a wound upon some

heart among his hearers. There were those present who mourned for the loss of friends dearer to them than all else of earth, who felt that the showy fabric of the mode would ill accord with the sentiments of their hearts. They were, too, perfectly willing that others, who felt differently, should act in accordance with their feelings.

Lastly, he came to the expenditure for dress in connection with our responsibility to God for the time, talents, and means, given us.

“Instead of lavishing so much upon the arraying of your poor, mortal bodies, destined to decay and become food for worms,” he said, “the expense should be saved to contribute to the support of the Gospel, in your own parish, in your own country, and in efforts to convert and enlighten the heathen. For this, ‘in that day,’ you will be called to the most solemn account.”

These words undoubtedly exerted a good influence, as must every good thing said, soon or late; for, that they were good, no one felt disposed to dispute. But their effect would have gone much further and deeper, had not the eyes of his hearers rested upon the clothing of the reformer's own person. The fabric of which his coat was composed was the finest and richest broadcloth; his vest was of the costliest pattern; and he wore a heavy gold watch, of a material and workmanship not often excelled among the convenient appliances of a clergyman. To all this, however, no serious objection could be offered; for it was a principle with Mr. Loomey, as with many purchasers, that the best articles are the cheapest in

the end ; a rule which has as many exceptions as there are applications, but a very convenient one as a subterfuge for extravagance.

About such a sermon it was not surprising that many comments were exchanged among the people. The gentlemen generally praised it, especially in hearing of their lady friends. Dr. Humphrey said that he preferred that the ladies should be allowed their own way in what concerned them so exclusively as their dress. Such encroachments upon their privileges did not accord with his chivalrous temperament.

"It will most likely be more profitable for you to have the ladies fashionably expose themselves to disease," retorted Zephaniah Wilkins, who had overheard his remark.

In reply, the doctor cast upon him one of his keen, peculiar smiles, and said only, "You are a pleasant young man !"

This occurred within the post-office ; and, as several were standing by, a loud laugh ensued. Zephaniah, feeling the current set against him, as it invariably did, walked away as fast as possible.

"Don't be in a hurry," called Father Shaw after him. "To see you run off so, makes a body think of one of them are foxes that had a firebrand tied on ter his tail by Samson, to set fire into his enemies' corn."

Not long after the delivery of this sermon, Mrs. Witherell was called to the funeral of her father ; and, as she had been particularly influenced by the remarks of Mr. Loomey upon mourning, she was determined to be foremost in setting a good example. It was in the opening of spring, when the ladies

lay aside their heavy hats, and other garments, for those of a lighter and plainer material. Mrs. Witherell appeared at the funeral under a hat blooming with green and cherry ribbon. A brilliant green shawl graced her shoulders, topped off with a collar embroidered in scarlet silk. In her bag and shoes were flame colored strings. She compelled her husband to replace his whole suit of "meeting black" for one of colors and bright buttons. This was very unpleasant for poor Simon; but he had no alternative. Always shrinking from observation, in absorbing consciousness of his own inferiority, on the Sabbath succeeding the funeral he walked to church looking more sheepish than ever. Mrs. Witherell had purposely come late; and it was observed by some lads in the vestibule, as Simon was smoothing down his refractory locks, preparatory to entering the church after the first prayer, that his wife pulled from his coat-pocket a yellow silk handkerchief, about one half in sight, so that, as he went up the aisle, no mistake might be made about his mourning.

Among other sermons, intended for reform, delivered by Mr. Loomey, was one upon fictitious literature. Never before were such stinging reproofs to novel readers heard by the people of Waterbury. To novels were attributed a great proportion of the wickedness and misery of the age. He seemed doing valiant battle with the ghost of a yellow covered novel, which, after rending to fragments, he hurled at the head of the prince of evil.

Many people liked this sermon. Persons who were more than suspected of flagrant violation of moral duties liked

it exceedingly. And some persons of excellent life, who conscientiously believed the words of the minister were just what were needed, liked it. Among these was Miss Leah, who nodded several times approvingly, and looked about in triumph upon the young people, whom she had in vain warned of the consequence of light reading. Mrs. Witherell was in ecstasies. She would never read a novel; as soon should a serpent come within her house as such a book. Zephaniah Wilkins proceeded at once to have the sermon printed.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### NEW AND OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

AFTER their establishment in their new home, Edith and Mary had many plans to arrange for the future which opened before them. One morning, when they had met in the boudoir,—a small, luxurious room, especially refitted by Mr. Raymond for their reception,—Edith seemed more thoughtful than usual. Silently she looked from the window upon the distant harbor shining in the sun like golden glass, on which were moving the white winged ships. Between the curtains the early light came in winsomely across her brow, stooping, in the interval, to lavish another hue of brilliancy upon the flowers, imbedded like gems in the deep moss ground of the carpet. Mary, in a becoming morning gown of rose color, with pearl satin borderings, was arranging flowers brought from the adjoining conservatory in the vases upon the marble leaves about the room. When all was disposed to her liking, she took her harp from the corner, and, sitting down amid the cushions of a divan, suffered her fingers to wander carelessly over the strings.

“Very thoughtful in Horace to bring me this, was it not?” she observed to Edith.

"Yes; — a gift among the many like a lulling breath of summer wind among all beautiful fruits and flowers."

"I must show my appreciation by learning rapidly to play as well as possible. To-day I commence receiving lessons."

"I have been thinking," said Edith, "that I must also begin to work in earnest for the future. I have shaped for myself many plans, and I must not pause by the attractive way. My next effort shall be to search out the residence of my aunt, of whom I have told you, and obtain an interview, if possible, according to the instructions of my mother before her death. It is a painful work, but one which must not longer be delayed."

"Horace will assist you in this," said Mary; "and I will hope for your success."

At breakfast Edith mentioned the matter to Mr. Raymond, inquiring if a lady by the name of Regleton were within the circle of his acquaintance.

"Yes; Mrs. Regleton, of Ashton avenue, — the wife of Alpheus Regleton," he replied.

"That is the lady! Describe her, if you please."

"A lady of fashion and position; a great patron of the most popular shops; the mother of two children, — one of whom is a belle among her set, the other a dissipated exquisite, or, more properly, a *roue*, — and the wife of one of the most prodigal livers in town."

"Do you know anything of the private, the real character of this lady?" exclaimed Edith, with earnestness.

"Nothing. How can we know any truth of the actual life of people here? The outside of those whom we meet in fashionable society is like show-cakes, gilded, iced, and ornamented over, so that we can no more test the real flavor of the one than the other example, by passing them on exhibition. Therefore it is that I like the dwellers in the country, who are less artificially 'got up.' No marvel it is to me that in ancient days it was not lawful to eat the shew-bread."

"Only for the priests," said Mary.

"Yes," continued Mr. Raymond; "some priests of modern times like the shew-cakes, provided they are rich."

"You remind me," said Edith, "of what Tennyson says :

' But if I praised the busy town,  
He loved to rail against it still ;  
For, ground in yonder social mill,  
We rub each other's angles down,  
And merge, he said, in form and gloss,  
The picturesque of man and man.'

For myself," she continued, with animation, "it was always a bright dream of my life that I might one day enjoy the varied advantages of a noble city like this. I am certain I shall like to reside here."

"I am glad, if you are pleased," said Mr. Raymond; "but what do you know of this Mrs. Regleton, Edith?"

"She is my mother's sister."

"Had I heard that earlier, I could have reserved some of



my comments upon the lady," said Mr. Raymond, with a smile; "though the old saying, 'It is not best to spoil a story for relations' sake,' holds good yet."

"There is no occasion for apologies," said Edith. "Circumstances of an unpleasant nature prevented my mother from having any intercourse with her sister after her marriage; but it was her request that I should visit her at the earliest opportunity."

"I will conduct you to her residence to-day, if you like, at the fashionable visiting hour. I would prefer to have you begin well, for the lady is severe in her exactions where fashion is concerned," remarked Mr. Raymond.

Edith found her aunt's residence one of the most superb in the city. As she crossed its threshold, her heart misgave her. But a thought of her mother, who she believed watched over her in all her ways, brought new courage. After waiting a long time for the appearance of her aunt in the receiving room, the servant who had taken her name returned, saying that Mrs. Regleton was very much engaged.

"Tell her," said Edith, "that I have business of importance, and would like a short interview, if possible."

At last Mrs. Regleton appeared. She was attired negligently, but in the richest fabrics, and bore her full, heavy figure, with an attempt at hauteur. There was one thing peculiar about her appearance; it was a bloom upon the Grecian extreme of her nose. In a man perhaps this would not have been particularly noticeable. As it was, it became the most prominent feature of her face. Her cheek was

"like a rose in the snow." This was evidently the result of the art of the toilet; but, as evidently, the nose had received its color from after-dinner libations. Edith could scarcely believe this woman to be her aunt, although her mother had told her there never was a resemblance between her sister and herself. Mrs. Regleton seated herself at a dim distance, while she fastened her cold gray eye upon Edith without speaking, taking no trouble to open the business, whatever it might be.

"I came," began Edith, her voice slightly trembling, "because my mother desired that I should see you." Her eyes filled with tears, and she could not make further explanation.

"Your mother!" repeated the lady, in a harsh, heavy voice; "who is your mother?"

"Mrs. Hale, your sister, madam, was my mother. I supposed you already knew of her death."

The rose upon the lady's cheek did not fade now; but her lips were a little paler, and the color upon her nose came out more distinctly than ever. She said nothing, and there seemed nothing more to be said, for the lady sat as though her sensibilities had been petrified. There seemed danger of her falling asleep. At length she arose with the same dumpish motion with which she had entered the room, pulled the bell, and sat down again, lifting her eye-glass in the direction of Edith.

"My mother thought—" began Edith; but, perceiving the

lady's eye-glass beside that crimson nose levelled upon her, she lost heart, and stopped.

"Thought what?" inquired her aunt, lowering her glass.

"She thought perhaps you might feel differently towards me, when she was gone." The servant entered at this moment to answer the summons of the bell. Mrs. Regleton looked at her watch.

"I am going out," she said. "Tell John to bring around the carriage in fifteen minutes."

"You are used to poverty, I suppose, as was your mother after she married," now observed her aunt, glancing upon Edith's plain mourning attire.

"My mother lived in good circumstances until a short time before my father's death," replied Edith, in her natural, calm manner. "He was unfortunate, since which we both were called to many trials."

There was another pause, broken at length by Mrs. Regleton.

"Employment is what you want of me, I suppose?" she asked.

It was evident she did not intend to waste more sensibility than words. "My daughter is in want of a maid; but that would not do. She will have a French woman." This she said to herself rather than to Edith, as she produced her tablets, from which she read, with her masculine voice, "Plain sewing for myself," "Embroidery for Hada," "A chambermaid —"

"I am not in need of assistance of that kind, at present," interrupted Edith, as soon as she had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the comprehension of her aunt's purposes towards her.

Mrs. Regleton lifted her eyes upon Edith with an expression as nearly like astonishment as her dull face was capable of betraying.

"Not want work!" she exclaimed, gruffly.

"The time has been when it was different with me; but I am grateful that time is not now," replied Edith.

"You don't live here in the city, then?" pursued the lady.

"I remain here at present."

"How is this?" inquired her aunt. "You have no relations to help you. Under whose protection are you?"

These words might have been used to express a friendly interest in her welfare, but her tone was significant with suspicion. Edith blushed to the temples as she heard this implication. She was silent, not knowing how to put aside her resentment, which was attributed by her aunt to a consciousness of guilt.

"I am under the protection of Him who has never forsaken me through all my afflictions, and I trust never will!" she answered, as she rose to leave.

"Stay," said her aunt, imperatively; "I have more to say. Sit down again, till I collect myself."

Withdrawing a gold snuff-box from her pocket, she took several nasal inhalations from between her fingers, which had

been inserted within the box. Mrs. Regleton never resorted to this practice in company, but the presence of Edith she considered of no consequence.

"You are young and ignorant," began the lady, when she had sufficiently regaled herself with the perfumed rappee: "your mother, it seems, is dead, and —"

"Yes; she was the child of the same parents as yourself," interrupted Edith, with some spirit.

Mrs. Regleton waved her hand impatiently.

"You are like your mother," she said, in reply to this; "you have a will which, if you do not crush down, will prove your ruin."

"I am proud," said Edith, as she stood erect, with flashing eyes, that now looked unflinchingly upon her aunt, "to be told I am like my mother. She was good; pure, noble, — all that the good revere and love: not like those who caused her, in life, many a pang for their neglect. She has gone to her reward, and her enemies cannot despoil her of that, God be praised!"

In the hearing of these words, spoken with a tone which carried power and conviction with it, her aunt was awed, despite herself. The pale, trembling girl, whom she had but late regarded as a suppliant before her, seemed suddenly transformed into her accuser and superior.

"You may go now," she murmured, with a feeble motion of her burly head. •

"Do you think," returned Edith, "I would wish to remain in the presence of one who could malign my mother? No!

it is needless for you to give me the permission. . Nothing could induce me to remain in this house another moment."

"Well said, since the choice is not left to you," observed her aunt.

"I envy nothing in your possession," said Edith, as she went out; "least of all do I envy you the conscience you must ever carry with you."

Edith walked rapidly away, as if she could not soon enough put distance between her and the woman whom she was compelled to acknowledge her aunt. Once more in the presence of Mary, the tenderness of her heart returned; she burst into tears.

"Dear Edith," exclaimed Mary, "do not feel so distressed. What has happened?"

When Edith could sufficiently control herself, she related an exact account of the interview with her aunt, concluding with a passionate declaration of her gratitude that she was not dependent for her bread upon one so utterly unfeeling.

"She did not imagine that you had friends who loved you," replied Mary; "but such a reception was very trying in any circumstances. You must recall some of that excellent advice you used to give me, when I was so much afflicted under injuries. 'It will come out right, if you will only be patient, and trust in Him who is able to do more abundantly than you can ask or think,' you would say; and your words proved true, — so soon in my life, too!"

When Edith had reflected upon this little episode of her life, in the solitude of her heart, she saw that she had repent-

ance to offer for not sufficiently commanding herself; and, recalling a higher principle from the holy example, prayed to be more lowly and patient in future.

Edith now took the preliminary steps for attending school, and more thoroughly perfecting her education. The best advantages were free to her, and, with the advice of Mr. Raymond, arrangements were soon made which promised that for which she had long been struggling. Upon an evening shortly preceding her new pupilage, she was sitting with Mary, and discussing her plans for the future, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Raymond.

"Come Mary, Edith," he said, rubbing his hands actively, as was his habit when pleased, "I've a lion below stairs to show you."

"Who?—what?" inquired Mary, not a little surprised.

"It is an old friend of mine, who has called to see you—Hugh Oliver, the distinguished lawyer and politician, and nephew to Major Oliver, of Waterbury, whom you know."

"I will be excused," now spoke Edith; "he will not care to see me."

"No," said Mr. Raymond, "I shall not admit your excuse. He is a single man, and who knows what may come of it?"

Edith could not be persuaded, however, for she was a little wilful upon occasion; and so Mary was compelled to descend to the drawing-room without her. A few minutes later she returned to Edith, saying that Mr. Oliver desired especially to see Miss Hale, if convenient, and he hoped he should not be disappointed.

"To see me!" exclaimed Edith; "he does not know me. There is some mistake, for I never saw him in my life."

"He is determined to see you, nevertheless," said Mary; "so you may as well capitulate at once."

"This is a singular affair," said Edith.

"It may, as Horace suggested, prove a double one ultimately," rejoined Mary.

With some confusion and much surprise, Edith this time obeyed the summons. Mr. Oliver arose and advanced to meet her with evident interest. Her first glance upon his dark, piercing eyes struck her speechless. For a moment she felt like falling to the floor. Perceiving her embarrassment, Mr. Raymond exerted himself to accomplish a familiar introduction.

"We have met before," said Oliver, with his own singular impressiveness. "You recollect me, Miss Hale?" he added, looking down upon her more searchingly than before.

"I do, perfectly," she replied, accepting the seat which Mr. Raymond offered her opportunely at this moment. Usually Edith was self-possessed before company, but now her face was roseate with blushes, and she could scarcely trust her voice to speak.

"I was not at all advised of this," said Mr. Raymond. "Why, Edith, did you not tell me that you knew Mr. Oliver?"

"I was not myself aware of the fact before," replied Edith.

"An enigma here," returned Mr. Raymond.

Oliver smiled — a rare and peculiar smile.

Recovering herself a little, Edith said, with an effort,



"After I entered upon my situation in W——, my first endeavor was to learn the name of the stranger by whose generous assistance it had been obtained. The account of this favor, for which I was under such obligations, I have already told you. But I found that he had directed that all knowledge of himself should be kept from me. Now I need no longer wonder, as before. The mystery is solved."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Raymond. Turning to Oliver, he added: "I owe you a debt of gratitude for this favor to one who is a near and dear relative to me."

"Nothing of that, if you please," rejoined Oliver, "The principal of the institution who received my recommendation, Miss Hale, is a friend of mine; and I requested he would not disclose my name if you inquired, because I wished—. Well, the reason is of no consequence—"

"Knowing that you have a habit of doing good deeds without permitting your name to go with them, I can readily divine the reason," interposed Mr. Raymond.

"Do not give me such credit," rejoined Oliver. "I presume a liking for making observations in my own way influenced me, chiefly. I was about to say," he continued, to Edith, "that intending, if possible, to renew my acquaintance with you at some future time, I made minute inquiries of my friend the principal respecting your success in that situation, all of which were answered most favorably. But, after you left W——, I lost track of you, until recently I learned, by

my uncle in Waterbury, that you resided here in the city, with my friend Raymond."

Edith now blushed deeper than before, if possible. These words fell with a keen pleasure upon her ear; for she had often wondered if the stranger had bestowed a second thought upon her, as, meanwhile, he had been so frequently in her thoughts.

Hugh Oliver was brilliant and conversational on this evening; so much so, that his old friend, who knew him well, was surprised. His manner, in the society of ladies, most frequently, was so reserved that he seemed phlegmatic and austere. With his clients he was popular; by his personal friends, loved and honored; and, in mass-meetings, or other assemblies of fervid politicians, he was almost worshipped. Sometimes, when his whole soul was absorbed in business, or in the preparation for some great occasion, he was taciturn and ungenial to all who came in his way. Again, he would bring forth a repartee, with unerring aim, as a privileged jester of ancient time, and become the soul of the company. His friends, who valued him for his superior talents, had learned to accommodate themselves to his moods.

Hugh Oliver had his imitators, or those who aspired to be, as has every man of mark. But the peculiar intrinsic worth and brilliancy of his character was his own, and defied the ingenuity of copyists. He could mingle with and seemingly be one of them; but never could they become like him. He could descend to the level of their wit, but never could they rise to the height of his wisdom; — as the diamond, by a

powerful chemical process, may be reduced to gaseous products, but no degree of art or science can change these products into diamond.

Edith listened to his words with rapt admiration, as, after a slight apology, he turned to Mr. Raymond, and spoke of an address which had lately been delivered upon a public occasion, and which was a topic of conversation among gentlemen at that time. Occasionally, however, as he conversed, his eye rested upon Edith with an expression of interest, which summoned anew the blushes to her cheek, and robbed her of all her usual steadiness of nerve. She was half angry with him for this power, and more displeased with herself for her lack of self-control; so that, when he turned again, and addressed some observation to her, she was ungracious enough to leave it to Mary to sustain her part of the conversation.

But Oliver, by a skilful remark or two, brought on an account of his ride with Edith from Birhampton, enlarging upon the adventure with the snake. He represented Edith as almost overcome with fright, — nearly expiring on the spot, except for his timely presence; all which he detailed with a most provoking enjoyment. Mr. Raymond shared the joke, and protested he had no idea before that Edith was such a little coward. Edith could not remain silent as she heard this. Oliver knew that nothing will kindle a lady into vivacity so soon as to impeach her courage. Then ensued quite a scene. Edith forgot her embarrassment, and appeared to advantage; for a woman of discernment and spirit is always interesting when natural and a little piqued.

Oliver observed her with ill disguised admiration. At last he arose to leave, saying that he had overstaid his time by an hour. The cordial invitation of Mr. Raymond and Mary to visit them frequently he promised to accept, to which Edith manifested only a polite indifference, while her heart was really beating high with emotion.

After his departure, Mr. Raymond rallied Edith upon the evident attention she had received from Oliver, concluding with, "But, dear Edith, I warn you not to fix your heart upon him; for I see he is just the ideal of your imagination."

"Thank you! Your advice is good," said Edith; "but, why is it needful? Is the gentleman vowed to celibacy?"

"Report whispers that he is to wed your cousin, Hadassa Regleton."

Edith started; the color faded from her cheeks.

"I can hardly give credit to the rumor," continued Mr. Raymond; "for I should suppose she is not the girl who would share such affections as his."

"What kind of a girl is she?" inquired Edith, laboring to suppress her interest.

"What is called 'splendid,'—a beauty, and a belle. She likes him, indisputably, as what girl who knew him would not?"

"Have you ever seen him bestow attention upon her?" pursued Edith.

"Yes, at our *soirées*, to which he is sometimes persuaded to come, though but seldom; for he does not like such society. He is not usually attentive to the ladies; but Hada Regleton

will make a man attentive to her, if possible. The secret of his civility, I presume, is her being the daughter of one of the most influential men in his political party; and, as Oliver is a rising man, who aims at place and power, he knows it would not be very politic to offend Regleton."

"I thought you spoke unfavorably of my aunt's husband," said Edith.

"What, then, my little innocent? Don't you know that some of the worst and most dissipated men in the country are among the prime movers of political parties? Oliver himself is known to be a man of principle, and about as conscientious a politician as there is, of these times; but he cannot turn his back upon every man who is not, if he wishes to gratify his ambition. He would find himself alone, suddenly."

Edith looked very thoughtful.

"Oliver may marry Hada, after all; for there is no knowing how men like him will marry. You may, with greater certainty, calculate upon anything else in the world," concluded Mr. Raymond.

The result of Edith's reflections upon this was, a vow to Heaven never to begin to love again until her love had been explicitly sought, and by one whose motives were thoroughly tested.

## CHAPTER XX.

### CASE OF CONDESCENSION.

It was the custom of the new minister of Waterbury to exchange frequently ; but the circle of his acquaintance among the clergy, for the most part, seemed widely dissimilar to that of Mr. Wellmont. Every minister brought a message of remarkable pointedness toward idiosyncrasies, occurrences, or supposed misdemeanors among the people. To conclude that this resulted from coincidence or spiritual intuition alone, was too great a tax upon credulity.

These ministers, generally, were from sections about which Waterbury people had no personal interest, and appeared like mineralogical specimens and petrifications, produced by Mr. Loomey for the curiosity rather than for the edification of his parish. A complaint against these exchanges reaching Mr. Loomey, by means of Zephaniah Wilkins and Mrs. Witherell, the next exchange announced was the Rev. Dr. Naylor.

"Not that I make this arrangement to please my people," said Mr. Loomey, in a comment upon the fact, to Deacon Dennis, "but, chiefly, for my own convenience. I wish to be absent for a week or two in the city, and, having some ac-

quaintance with Dr. Naylor, an exchange for one Sabbath has been arranged."

The Indians used to mark the month of the arrival of wild-geese with the title of the "goose moon;" and it would have been no more than befitting to have honored the visits of this city clergyman with some such distinguishing appellation. As the people had not forgotten that this divine had graced the pulpit of Waterbury on a former occasion, they were not wholly unprepared for the honor in reserve for them. His sermon began in this way:

"For many years have I been the pastor of a church and congregation in the city. For the last year I have been abroad; by *abroad* I mean on the continent; by that I mean Europe, — countries such as Italy, Germany, &c. I now appear before you with the wisdom and experience of all these years of varied observation and knowledge, having also read as many books upon all sides of theology as any other minister or man living. And I am going now to expound to you the oracles of God; by oracles, I mean the Scriptures, or divine communications, and I trust I shall succeed in making you understand me. I am not used to the country, and know not the spiritual food which should be set before you; but, if you will give me your attention, and make an effort to understand me, my labor will not be in vain."

Having delivered this preface, he read from his notes an introduction to his text, after which, at length, was announced the text. By that time, some of the people began to exchange glances. Some looked frigidly offended at these

implications of country ignorance; and some were so absorbed with curiosity as to what would come next, they did not pause for reflection. Father Shaw gave a very loud, sonorous ahem; Major Oliver extended his limbs along on the seat of his pew, and peered out from one eye toward the pulpit, alternating with a shrewd look about him with the other. Dr. Humphrey's face revealed a variety of emotions. He seemed to think that the minister was afflicted with a disease of the brain; or, as the goatherd thought of the valiant knight of La Mancha, "the apartments of this poor gentleman's skull were but indifferently furnished." A few, however, looked upon this city divine as upon an oracle.

As he proceeded with his discourse, he would deliver a sentence, then pause to explain the simplest ideas in connection, continually expressing the hope that the people would not misunderstand him, and as frequently as possible introducing an allusion to the amount of his intellectual resources and honors, especially since his return from Europe. It was plain that the original sermon, though a fair one, was by no means extraordinary; and it was so much interlarded with explanatory remarks to meet the ignorance of those to whom it was addressed, that the proportion and effect of the whole was destroyed. Usually Dr. Naylor's style of speaking was somewhat as Blair said of Lord Shaftesbury's—"ever in buskins;" but, addressing this people, it seemed that he was following the advice which Cromwell gave to his soldiers—"fire low." He fired so low, however, that he hit their heels, instead of their hearts or heads.



All his instructions and admonitions were delivered to his hearers with the denominative of "you," instead of "we." "You are sinful," &c. "You must make this and that endeavor," &c. Once, in allusion to himself, he said, "I, though a minister and a vicegerent of God, am mortal like yourselves." This he evidently regarded a great concession. In his frequent mention of the distinguished places which he had visited "in Europe," and the people with whom he had enjoyed an intimate acquaintance, or to certain books with which he was familiar, he spoke as though they had never been heard of by those whom he now favored with the sound of his voice; or, if heard of, as indistinctly and imperfectly as of the sacred places, gods, and books, of the Hindoos; and to "the city" he gave as much distinction as a Moslem to Mecca.

Alexander declared that the Celts were great boasters; "a character," adds his biographer, "which, from the Scordisci down to the Gascons and the modern Celts of Ireland, they most undoubtedly have deserved." A genuine Irishman, however, would give up beaten at boasting beside this inflated doctor of divinity.

"Poor man!" said Dr. Humphrey, in conversation with a few friends, after this sermon of such singular importance, "he belongs to that numerous class who think that the knowledge, refinement, and sense of the world, is necessarily derived from associations with the city, while the 'extra touches' of superiority are the result of 'going to Europe.'"

"He evidently thinks us all a set of fools," rejoined one.

"There was no respect lost," said Major Oliver, "for he can't think us more foolish than we think him, though he has been to Europe, and always preached in a city."

"No, no," now broke in Father Shaw, "he an't a fool, though he 'pears plaguy like one. I can see he's cunnin' in him; ef there warnt, he would n't show so much contrivance to set himself up over other folks, and strain so hard to make 'em feel like underlins. He's like a man with two faces, — one back, t' other forrard. One on 'em is an ass's face, t' other a fox's, and the ass's comes fust. But, ef a body'll look sharp, he can see right through it, to the cunnin' that's behind, in no time. No, that are minister an't a fool," concluded Father Shaw, with a sagacious shake of his head.

"It takes you to discern the difference," rejoined Major Oliver; "for there is nothing that makes a public speaker seem more like a fool than to talk about himself all the time, for fear he won't be appreciated."

"He reminded me," said Dr. Humphrey, "of what Shakspeare's Bottom said of his dream: — 'Methought I was — there is no man can tell what. Methought — I was, and methought I had. — But man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen; man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was; it shall be called Bottom's dream, because it hath no bottom.'"

An allusion to Shakspeare always kindled Major Oliver,

for, in his youthful days, that author's works were his sole body of philosophy, almost of divinity.

"I'll tell you," he said, "another character this divine is also like. When he hoped so fervently that we might understand him, as though there were danger of his knowledge and formidable honors overpowering us, he was like Snug, who, when about to act the part of the lion, came out, fearing his audience might be frightened out of their wits, and told them 'Not to quake and tremble when Lion rough in wildest rage doth roar, for it was only Snug the Joiner, dressed up in a lion's skin.' Some one should have offered an explanation of this Naylor dressed up in a lion's skin."

"Betwixt Bottom and Snug," said Dr. Humphrey, "the great city divine is sufficiently explained."

"How dare you allow yourselves such freedom when speaking of a minister?" interrupted a carping voice, at this juncture. They turned simultaneously, and saw Zephaniah Wilkins. "I have heard all you have said here," he now commenced.

"Indeed! a great matter," rejoined Major Oliver.

"I am astonished at such irreverence in persons professing godliness," continued the conscience-keeper in general.

"Young man," said Father Shaw, "it must be hard work for yer to live, there's allers such a lot of evil right under yer nose."

"What! is not every mortal free to speak?"

"I'll give my reasons, though I break my neck!"

concluded Dr. Humphrey, just as Dr. Naylor emerged from

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the church. With lofty looks, as though occupied in astronomical calculations, and entirely above sublunary matters, he held his way, little imagining the people were not all staring upon him with awe and admiration, as the slightest return they could make for his wonderful condescension in appearing for a single Sabbath in a country village.

In the afternoon his discourse was upon the Christian ministry, from that passage, "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." His ideas upon this subject were a little novel, whether originating purely from himself, or from his illimitable observation and reading. After the priesthood had been sufficiently glorified, as chosen of God to minister and especially to rule in holy things, he alluded to some of the sacrifices which they had made, exhibiting the temper of their Master. Among these, he adduced instances of the labors of the ministry among the poor, which would have been approved as "acceptable sacrifices," had he not dwelt with such lofty and chilling emphasis upon "the poor," whom he evidently regarded as embracing the inferior class exclusively.

"I dare say," said Father Shaw, afterward, in relation to this, "the man has been a poor boy, and has had to work for his daily porridge; for, I'm an old man, and in all my days I never see folks talk so about 'the poor,' and 'work,' and draw such lines 'twixt people, but what some time or other in their lives they, or their daddies, had to work as tight as ever they could to keep themselves out of the poor-house. Ye never hear a body who is raal gentlefolk, and knows what's

what, and no mistake, talk so ; for they know it 's only marcy, and not merit, that makes them better off than their poor feller-critters, and in the next shift of God's fortin they may be blown clear down ter the foot of the hill, while the poor folks may be carried up."

Dr. Naylor's presentiment proved prophetic ; he entirely failed of being appreciated by the country congregation, notwithstanding his labors to prove his superiority.

Not long after this, Dr. Humphrey was visited by an old friend who was a clergyman of another denomination, a devout and exemplary man, whom he invited to attend with him an evening meeting for prayer and conference in the vestry. A good number were present, for, owing to the active efforts of a few devoted people, an unusual degree of interest in religious things prevailed at this time. A half hour after the time appointed for the commencement of the meeting passed by without Mr. Loomey's appearance, and as his tardiness was a habit to which they had become accustomed, the stranger minister was invited by Father Shaw to open the exercises. He was heard with serious attention, for he evidently spoke as he was moved by the spirit of truth. His religion was the old fashioned, experimental religion of the Gospel, and not simply a theology born of modern isms, which, issuing from the brain instead of the heart, is utterly powerless to touch the heart. The Bible was the exhaustless mine in which he had sought diligently for treasures ; and he had found pure gold, from which he had shapen the ornaments of his spirit. Every word he uttered fell upon the hearts with

power, convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and his short, fervent, and appropriate prayer seemed to call down blessings divine upon the waiting listeners.

All the words were so indicative of a universal sympathy with the faith and needs of all the true followers of the great Master, that no one had thought of the speaker's belonging to another denomination. And, to do the majority of that people justice, they were never disposed to regard such differences with the tenacious prejudices which, tradition informs us, have sometimes existed among Christians of different denominations. But when Mr. Loomey appeared, and saw another standing in his place who was not after his own order, he at once betrayed displeasure, which he could not or did not care to conceal.

Without noticing the minister, he arose before the meeting and expressed openly his disapproval of their not waiting for his coming.

"I feel wounded," he said, "even as was Jesus when he came and found his disciples asleep, and reproved them; 'What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Ye should have watched and prayed that ye might not have entered into temptation!'" Other remarks he added, which expressed so much feeling, no one could fail to see that he had for once, at least, forgotten his usual dignity, and was exhibiting the appearance of an angered man. When he had concluded, Father Shaw arose and said:

"Instid of our bein' like the disciples who were found asleep, we was, in fact, wide awake, and watching for you to

come; though, we gut along so well, arter this ere minister begun, we 'd 'bout furgut to watch for you. We was havin' a good meetin', and we felt our hearts drawn out towards this man; and I, for one, don't care a snap ef he's 'listed under jest such a banner as mine, or not. At any rate, Christ and him crucified is on his banner, and that's all I want to know. 'But —" Here the old man paused, looked hard at a nail in the floor a minute, then, casting about him one of his queerest looks, proceeded, "This ere makes me think, instid of our Lord and his disciples, of that are time when the sons of God came to, present themselves afore the Lord, and *Satan*, he came also amongst 'em. Now, I don't say that Satan has come in here, but I do say that it 'pears as ef a spirit contrary to that of the Lord had come. And the best thing we can do is, to pray it out as fast as we can."

An unusual sensation now pervaded the vestry-room, and smiles were exchanged freely. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! These few plain words of Father Shaw fell down on that assembly like burning coals. No one, however, felt actually burned, but Mr. Loomey; he was afire in a moment.

"I am astonished beyond measure at the wicked spirit I see here manifested," he replied; "it is a spirit of disorder, of sin, of the depths of evil," he paused for shortened breath; he took off his spectacles, and laid them aside rashly; he sat down, but arose almost as soon, and continued, "I shall not say much on this occasion; it is not proper to lay open our hearts before strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of

Israel. But, be assured, this shall not be the end of this matter!" and he looked at Father Shaw as though he would gladly have pitched him into a red hot furnace, in less than a thought.

The stranger minister now arose, and, in a tone of sincere feeling, "regretted that he had unintentionally been an instrument of wounding another, and that other a laborer in the great vineyard of the Lord. He said when he found himself among Christians of whatever denomination, with whom he had fellowship as followers of Christ, it was his habit and privilege to join with them in the worship of the God over all, blessed forever; as he hoped it would be his unspeakable glory to do in heaven hereafter. But, if in so doing, on this occasion, he had been an instrument of dissension among brethren, he was unfeignedly sorry;" and, taking his hat, he walked calmly out.

Thereupon Zephaniah Wilkins began in favor of Mr. Loomey, and insinuated even more than usual against "certain members of the church," who were pestilent and disorderly. He was now in his element, it was clear; for he had at last found a nail on which to hang up a reproof, tangible and durable. After speaking at length, in his own peculiar style, he said that he perfectly approved of Mr. Loomey's saying that the matter should not end in that way. He, for one, would sustain him in obtaining whatever redress he should think proper to demand; for certain members of that church had been suffered, quite too long and unconscionably, to deal in universal freedom against the ministers of the church, and



the Aarons and Hurs who would stay up their hands. Deacon Goodwin put forth some endeavors to mediate between the excited feelings of the parties, but they were ineffectual. But those present, who were in the habit of being prominent in important matters of the church, did not see clearly the wisdom of taking part in such a singular difficulty. After this, of course, the religious exercises of the meeting could not be continued, and, with a variety of emotions, the people dispersed to their several homes.

By the next day, an account of the meeting had circulated throughout the village, and it was as currently reported that Mr. Loomey was making preparations for some unusual event.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE COUNCIL.

ALL this resulted in an Ecclesiastical Council. Clergymen and laymen of the same denomination in the vicinity were invited to attend, and take part in the deliberations of this body.

It was also a motley one, though embracing only those who were members of that church, and kindred churches; there were short ministers and long ones, solemn and serene ones, handsome and plain; and so it became scarcely less an object of curiosity, to the reflecting observer, than the figures of ecclesiastical personages in one of the rooms of the Roman Tribune, with their faces of agate, eyes of opal, coats and robes of lapis-lazuli, legs of jasper, and sandals of porphyry. They looked the impersonations of various ideas, rather than so many mortal beings; and were as clearly defined in their bearing from the active men of the business world, as transcendental philosophy is from natural philosophy. Mr. Loomey had generally summoned only those whom he thought to be after his own heart; hence there was a class of clergymen hardly represented at all.

As yet no one of them had any definite idea for what they had been assembled. They only knew that differences existed between Mr. Loomey and certain members of his church.

After a prayer by the Rev. Mr. Lund, in which he expressed his opinion to Heaven with freedom concerning the minister's trials, the hardness of people's hearts, and the judgments consequent, the Rev. Mr. Crabtree was chosen chairman, and Zephaniah Wilkins secretary. The allegations, for the consideration of which the council had been summoned, were then read :

"Rev. Mr. Loomey and others against Moses Shaw and others.

"*First* : Moses Shaw has been so irreverent and uncharitable as, in a meeting for conference and prayer, to associate the idea of his pastor with that of Satan.

"*Second* : J. R. Humphrey and Clement Oliver have been so irreverent and uncharitable as to compare a reverend divine, who had been invited by their pastor to preach in exchange for him, to Shakspeare's Bottom and Snug.

"*Third* : Moses Shaw, J. R. Humphrey, Clement Oliver, and others, have, on various occasions, and in reference to spiritual things, manifested gross disrespect for the opinion of their pastor, and of certain useful members of the church, thereby exerting a baleful influence, and sowing sedition among the followers of the truth."

This was read by Zephaniah, in his own nice, peculiar manner. He was a finical-looking man, with a straight figure, straight black hair, always brushed smoothly on either side of

its division in the middle, and with a straight nose, save the extremity, which suddenly turned upward, like a fish-hook which had been somewhat bent out by use. Possessing illimitable confidence in and respect for Zephaniah Wilkins, he stood up before all that assembly, and read these accusations against men of such "dark brown years" with great promptitude and nice emphasis.

These accusations produced no slight sensation among the audience. Some of the ministers looked graver than before. Mr. Crabtree, the chairman, elevated his eyes to the carved centre-piece on the ceiling of the church, as if in momentary expectation of a glimpse of the Evil One through the little aperture. Mr. Swinton actually laughed before he was aware, but suddenly leaned forward under the desk-cushion and drank from a glass of water which had been prepared for the accommodation of the ministers, who were expected to have a dry time before they got through with business of so much importance. When he again emerged to the view of the people, he was all composed decently and in order; but there was a certain look upon his face, which, like one of gutta serena, betrayed its capacity for strange expressions at the slightest pull of the risibilities.

Mr. Loomey opened the meeting with lengthy remarks. He had completely recovered his habitual dignity and solemnity, and appeared on this occasion with all the heroism of one who has been called to pass through as many hairbreadth escapes and severe afflictions as was the apostle Paul. He animadverted, with zeal and precision, upon the trials he had

endured, since coming to Waterbury, from the irreverence of some of the members of the church in setting a general example of insubordination to the minister. This occupied at least an hour. Another hour he consumed in bringing proofs, scriptural and otherwise, of the necessity of enforcing the most stringent church government for the protection of the clergy in carrying out the rule of the churches solemnly committed to their care. He concluded by appealing to all present, who were conscientiously in favor of good order as laid down in the Scripture, and of the punishment of the seditious by public example, to sustain him on that occasion.

One of the ministers inquired if the scriptural commands for such cases of difficulties had been followed in this instance. To this Mr. Loomey said it was impracticable, in the present case, to visit the offenders: they would have added sin to sin, by gross irreverence to a minister of God; and, to avoid altercation as much as possible, he had deemed it the wisest course to lay the matter before individuals capable of adjusting the difficulty at once. In this he alleged that many of the church had upheld him; and he called upon his deacons, and others whom he regarded as his friends, to express their minds.

Deacon Dennis had such reverence for all the ministers of his faith, that he would almost have been willing to have died for one of them, if called upon. He therefore spoke with earnestness against the accused, and said that those that had the disposition to compare such a good and devoted man as their pastor to the Evil One, or to compare any minister of God to

heathenish characters with bad names, could not possibly have the spirit of truth abiding in them. He was in favor of expressing decided disapprobation of such conduct; for, if such examples were countenanced, the rising generation would all be left to go to the state prison and to perdition. One or two others immediately seconded these remarks.

Mr. Loomey made several efforts, personally and by proxy, to get Mr. Pickering to speak in his favor. Mr. Pickering paid largely for the support of the ministry, and had many under his influence; but he seldom spoke in public, and, on this occasion, the appearance of such a congregation awed him beyond the possibility of opening his lips before them. Besides, he was not wholly in favor of Mr. Loomey.

After this, witnesses were called, questions were asked, records read, and remarks interpolated by Mr. Loomey and his friends, always foremost of which was Zephaniah Wilkins. Various were the schemes employed by Mr. Loomey. Sometimes he affected to be indifferent as to the result of the council, being sure that the cause of truth and justice must ultimately prevail.

And so the first day was consumed. The accommodation of so many ministers was a matter of some calculation. That they might as much as possible be in the company of Mr. Loomey for private conference, Mrs. Witherell received them to the limits of the capacity of her establishment. She was necessitated, in consequence, to ask Mr. Loomey to take a bed-fellow in the person of one of the clergymen. He was overwhelmed with the idea! It was a desecration of his

personal sanctity ! He said : " I will willingly set my weary body upon a cane-seat chair and read my Bible all night ; but share my bed with any human being — never ! " In reporting this to her friends subsequently, Mrs. Witherell exclaimed :

" Dear me ! I don't think I ever felt so bad in my life as as I did when I found I had so wounded his feelings. And, when I saw his very eyelids tremble with emotion, I could have fallen at his feet, and implored his pardon with tears. He has ways of his own, but he is one of the best men, — indeed, I may say *the* very best of men I ever knew ; and to think how he has been used here among those for whom he is laboring so hard ! What will become of his enemies I don't dare to think ! "

On the following day, after Mr. Loomey had alluded to the indignities he had received, Father Shaw arose before the assembly. No one could fail to be impressed by his appearance.

His graces were not factitious, — made up of liberal privileges and endowments. He was what God had made him, not man. His brain was full of sound common sense ; and his heart obeyed its dictates for the most part in the channel of right feeling.

As he arose there, he seemed the study of the sculptor, who writes his work with the chisel upon stone, rather than of the artist, with his pencil of exquisite shading and tinting. His hair, swept away from the top of his head by the ravages of time, in wavy lines of silver, dashed here and

there with deeper shades of a paly green, fell on either side to his shoulders. His eye was blue, kindly and benevolent in expression, with certain lines about the corners, corresponding with the curved lips, that betokened a capability for mirth, and appreciation of the ludicrous. But when he was aroused, the light of an earnest, independent soul shone steadily within it, which no other eye could behold unmoved. He was of medium height, perfectly erect, and, although moulded after a primitive order, always appeared in an attire which was of good quality, and scrupulously neat. Looking about him calmly for a moment, he thus began :

“Friends and brethren : I’m fetched up here on a charge of want of reverence for my minister. Perhaps ye think that what I said was in the spleen of the time, and that I shall be brought to see my own shame. There’s one Bein’ who can make me bow down to the dust afore him, and *only* one. I an’t sorry for a word I’ve said about any minister ; and, if I live and I think there’s occasion, I shall say a deal more. Thanks be to God, I live in a land of freedom ! I’ll be drawn through a knot-hole, I’ll be burnt ter the stake, I’ll be chopt up into mince-meat, afore I’ll submit to any man so as not to speak out my mind when I think it ought to be spoken. My father afore me fought for his liberty on the field of battle, and I loaded his gun for him ; but now I’m old enough to load my guns and fire too. I know the Gospel is a gospel of peace ; but what’s a body goin’ to do ef all can’t agree to be peaceable and on equal terms ? Shall one man cringe to another, so that there’ll be peace ? I shan’t,



for one, to a man about half as old as I am, when he lets off such a sperit of evil ! ”

“ I call the speaker to order ! ” now interrupted Mr. Loomey.

“ Well, you ’ve a right to, and so have I a right to take no notice on ’t,” responded Father Shaw. He continued : “ Let me jest put a case about this ere. A boy, with a great consate of himself, goes to college, and then inter one of them are institutions called the Schools of the Prophets. I guess, ef the ancient prophets had to go inter such schools as them, they ’d rather go through lions’ dens, and red-hot furnaces, and great fishes’ bellies. They study books made up by men who are called great philosophers ; but they are ’bout as much philosophers as that are one that spent so much time afore a shop, contrivin’ how a calf got through a hole, ’cause the tail of one hung out there for a sign. They larn, too, to despise all common people, as they call ’em, — all such old fellers as I am, — all kinds of work, and everything on airth, only what they think is as good as they are ; for there an’t nothin’ better. They study a deal, too, how to govern people, and keep ’em in their places, as they say. Least of all do they study the Bible. Well, they come out knowin’ no more ’bout real life than a man that’s allers lived in a balloon. Some on ’em go to Garmany, and study a spell more, which only makes a bad matter wuss. Then they set themselves up for ministers, and call those that go to hear ’em preach ‘ my people,’ and all that ere. They straight begin their trainin’ business, and order round people as if they’s so many mer-

chines, — old men, too, who 've studied the Scripturs all their days, and have forgut more than they ever knew. Ef they won't cringe to 'em, they must be hauled up, as I am now, and then turned out of the church. I'm in favor of eddication ; though, perhaps, ye think I an't, by what I've said. The more a man knows, the better, ef it's the right kind of knowledge. I don't care how much time a body spends in college, or anywhere else, ef he won't come out and undertake to drive the whole world arterwards, and scream, everywhere he goes, ' Attention, all creation ! here's somebody to cringe to ! '

" When ye git together at yer solemn feasts and yer 'sociations, ye say, ' What's the reason we don't prosper and flourish as we used to ? ' Our churches are all goin' down ; our ministers don't stay long in a place, and we're running out year by year. Why don't the sheep foller arter the shepherd as they used ter ? Now, I remember readin' somewhere that the shepherds in old times used to make music by blowin' on reeds, and pipes, and such are, so that the flock loved to follow 'em. Well, let the shepherds now-a-days go afore the sheep with their *music*, and they won't have to go behind with their *whips* ; — there won't be any stragglers, nor no buntin' ; — they'll all go on as slick as a mill. The prophet Isaiah said : ' The darter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard ; as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers ; as a besieged city. To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord. When ye come to appear afore me, who hath required this at your hand to

tread my courts?' Now, there's jest the pint. These ere ministers, arter they've studied and studied their brains all out with high notional nonsense, and are so arbitrary, as ef nobody knew nothin' but the ten commandments 'cept themselves, they'll scold and fume away at the world, which jogs right on without stoppin' to look at 'em; they'll complain of not bein' taken care on, and sustained, and all that ere. 'But who hath required this at yer hands? saith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the callin' of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meetin'.' Jest as our solemn meetin' was turned to be the other night."

"I call the speaker to order!" now spoke Zephaniah Wilkins.

Father Shaw turned and looked for an instant upon Zephaniah; but he resumed, without deigning other notice: "I don't believe in such calls to preach. The Bible expressly speaks against all such work. It says: 'I have not sent these prophets, but they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.' How did Christ and his apostles do? In the fust place, they were humble; they did n't set themselves up over anybody else, and this ere is the way to get exalted. The more a man 'sumes for himself, the less other folks will give him. They were moved by the spirit of love, and had n't time nor heart to see ef other folks revered 'em enough. The apostle Peter says: 'Feed the flock of God which is among you, takin' the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither

as bein' *lords* over God's heritage, but bein' samples to the flock.' I've allers, all my life, marked it, when ministers, or anybody else in the church, 'sume the most holiness and sanctipocrisy to themselves, settin' up as lords, you may look out for — "

"This must be stopped!" again interrupted Mr. Loomey, arising suddenly, while he took off his spectacles and laid them down angrily on the desk before him.

"It is to be hoped," said the chairman, "that all will bear in mind the solemnity of the time and place; and that the wishes of Mr. Loomey, the pastor here, may be regarded."

"Yes," continued Father Shaw, "so far as they are in accord with what's right. I know I've spoke a long time, but I've a word more. I don't want you all to think I've no respect for any of the men that are ministers. I've seen and known ministers I've liked as well as ever I liked any man; they had been to college, and to them are Prophet schools, too, but they feared God and worked righteousness; somehow they had n't got sp'iled, and they warn't plagued any for want of reverence or love, that's sartin. Now, this I mean just as much as I mean all the rest I've said. I'm a man who tries to tell the truth, and don't want to smooth anythin' over with plaster for the sake of pleasin' folks in power; and, when I think I see the sperit of Satan manifested, I shall say so, let it hit who or where it will. As one said in ancient time, 'I am old and gray-headed, and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here

I am ; witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed.' ”

He sat down, somewhat exhausted. A sensation pervaded the house ; Mr. Crabtree seemed stunned in the very height of his power. But before he had time to recover himself, or certain others to put away their smiles, Dr. Humphrey, the second person arraigned in the accusation, arose.

“ My friends,” said he, “ I think I need say nothing in vindication of my character, as I am well known to a majority of those present. I am charged with irreverence in making comparison between a minister and Shakspeare’s Bottom. I make no retractions. I still think this prescription pretty nearly hit the disease, though I have no prospect of effecting a cure. I was the principal agent in the difficulty which sprang up at the meeting about which so much has been said here, as the minister who displeased Mr. Loomey and a few others would not have entered the meeting at all had it not been for my urgent invitation. In regard to this, I say that, although I am accused of irreverence, I have a great respect for good ministers of other denominations of Christians, as well as my own. I have no idea that heaven is a small, narrow place, just large enough to admit the good of my own sect only, but the good of all sects under the sun. I hope I am not uncharitable when I say that my opinion of any man who manifests a spirit entirely contrary to this is that he is not possessed of the Spirit of God. I have been reading of late—since so much has been said hereabouts of the gentleman of the cloven feet—an ancient theological

book, called the *World Bewitched*, which endeavors to disprove the inspired account of the influence of the devil over mankind. It was written by Belthazar Becher (observe the surname is spelt with but one *e*), a minister of Amsterdam. But neither this book, nor any book, can make me deny that the devil does drop in upon us on occasion; sometimes even into the best places as well as the worst, in which he is presumed to be most frequently. There are times when larger and older communities seem as much bewitched as Belthazar Becher thought the whole world was."

"This irreverence," now spoke Deacon Dennis, "should not be suffered. In behalf of my injured pastor and this church, I call the speaker to order."

"It is quite new to me," proceeded the doctor, "to hear so much about irreverence; and it strikes me as rather a singular note of warning to fall upon the ears of those who are without the pale of the Romish Church. The Duke of Wellington once wrote to a man in a precarious position of authority, 'The less you claim, the more you will have.' That was given by a titled man, and under a realm of crowns and sceptres. Think you it is less applicable to a people in a country like ours? Now, sirs, especially you that have summoned this council, you have heard what I have to say briefly,— what expiation do you require of me? If I should acknowledge that I repented of any act I have done, or word I have said, touching which this council has been called, I should deserve to be condemned to wander on foot over the world till this mortal should put on immortality."

Major Oliver directly followed with, "I have but a word to say. It is this: I am charged with irreverence in comparing a reverend divine to Shakspeare's Snug. If the coat fits, let it be put on; and I remain of the opinion that it is a pretty *snug* fit."

The three accused having concluded, the visage of Mr. Loomey, like Nebuchadnezzar's against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, was changed, and he looked about him with an air, as much as to say, "You have heard for yourselves; judge between me and them."

After a whispered consultation with one or two ministers, Mr. Crabtree announced that the public meeting would be adjourned till the afternoon, when the result of the deliberations of the council would be made known. In the mean time various were the conjectures as to what would be the result, and many preferences and opinions as to what it should be were exchanged. No one was allowed to be present from the church of Waterbury—not even Mr. Loomey; so all curiosity had to pause for its gratification until the appointed time. But Zephaniah Wilkins, Mrs. Witherell, and some others, looked complacently, as if they knew more about how affairs would terminate than they chose to tell.

When at last the time came, the members of the council appeared, and the report was read; it was most unexpectedly and singularly devoid of condemnation of the accused party, or of any party, recommending the greater exercise of mutual forbearance and charity, to the end that brotherly love might continue. There were, indeed, exhortations ex-

pressed that the members of that church might bear in mind that the great Head of the church had given some to be pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, and that such shall be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake. But this was the extent of the implied reproofs.

Mr. Loomey betrayed his thorough disappointment at once. Had all his efforts in calling that council been in vain? Was it possible, after what there had been said, that the arbiters could not recommend the expulsion of these refractory members, unless they would ask forgiveness before the congregation?

To let the matter pass in that way was impossible. For a half an hour he spoke of his trials with great bitterness, and even insinuated that the council had been actuated by unworthy motives in bringing in their decision. He called upon all his true and firm friends to bear witness of his persecutions. Zephaniah Wilkins arose to speak, but Father Shaw had preceded him.

"I'm in favor of peace," he said; "and, from what this ere council has brought in, I know they are. I'd no idee they would show so much Christian charity as they do; for now I'll say this much—I know I've said things here, though they're true, yit they're hard to be swallered down by ministers as the hottest potater that was ever roasted. I'm willin' to go on, right ahead, and not look back. We can't alter a thing that's done; all we've gut to do is to look out for the futur'. I've nothin' agin anybody here, and anybody is a plaguy fool that'll hold on to anythin' agin me. I must



say one thing more, though, ef I knew I was goin' to give up the ghost the next minute. All these ere things makes me think an amazin' sight of when Balak, the son of Zipper, King of Moab, arose and warred agin Israel, and sent and called Balaam to come and cuss the people. But Balaam could n't do nothin' agin the Lord, ef he did whip his ass so that it spoke right out. 'How shall I cuss whom God hath not cussed?' he said, at last, when he found how 't was. 'And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to cuss mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether!' It says, too, that Balak's anger was kindled agin Balaam, and he smote his hands together."

Father Shaw resumed his seat, amid numerous smiles. Dr. Humphrey and Major Oliver both expressed their hearty desire for future union among the members of the church, in a few explicit and friendly words. Several of the clergymen also made brief addresses, in a very conciliatory spirit,— particularly Mr. Swinton, who, as usual, contrived to introduce some fragrant allusion to roses, and the gentler sex who were present.

After a concluding prayer, which dismissed the assembly, Father Shaw went to all the ministers and shook hands heartily, wishing them the blessing of Israel's God, and also that they would all go to his house and have a supper.

"I killed my fatted calf aforehand," he said; "and I thought ef nobody would come to eat it, I'd be the prodigal myself. Ef ye go to makin' scuses, and say ye can't

come, I shall go out into the lanes and byways and call in everybody I can find."

But the ministers were not disposed to excuse themselves,—at least, the majority of them. Notwithstanding Mr. Loomey received a particular invitation from Father Shaw, he took himself off to his own place as solemnly as possible, with Zephaniah Wilkins on one side of him, and Mrs. Witherell on the other. Father Shaw extended his invitation also to Major Oliver and Dr. Humphrey, and the two deacons. Deacon Dennis demurred a little about going; but the thought of all the ministers who would be present, and the prospect of the good cheer, decided him. Deacon Goodwin compromised the matter by supping with Father Shaw, and visiting Mr. Loomey in the evening. Dr. Humphrey was called away to visit a patient, but Miss Leah prevailed on his wife to be his representative, as she saw that the vivacity of that lady would be an indispensable assistance to her in the entertainment of so many guests.

The ministers all seemed in excellent spirits. Mr. Crabtree fortunately was not present; they had, therefore, no iceberg among them. Their professional dignity, in a great measure, was laid aside, and the atmosphere soon became thoroughly comfortable; for nothing has a more pacifying effect, after discussion, than a generous feast.

When all had eaten, Father Shaw brought forward a small basket, which he said held something for each of the ministers to carry to his wife.

"You see," said he, "you've been gone two days; and

they'll be lonesome and cross-like without ye, by the time ye git home. They'll say, 'I want ter know ef ye had to stay so long for that old Shaw's sass? I hope ye turned him out of the church, at last.' Now, jest take these ere, with my 'good luck' to 'em."

And he passed around the basket, which was found to contain bank-notes. The ministers laughed heartily at the pleasant surprise, and expressed their thanks.

"Stop," said Major Oliver, when the basket was exhausted of its contents; "I am a bachelor, and I must not be less chivalrous to the ladies than Father Shaw. Here's a bank-bill of a respectable denomination, which I would like to have changed and divided equally."

After some delay, it was accomplished, and the gifts were pocketed amid new expressions of gratitude.

## CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH VARIOUS MATTERS ARE DISCUSSED.

EDITH had now entered upon her new school-life. In the first week of her pupilage, a young lady, apparently of about her own age, was assigned for her seat-mate. This young lady did not settle into her position without availing herself of the common school-girl privilege of a cool and careful scrutiny of her companion. She then opened one of her books to the first blank leaf, to search for her name; but, not finding it, put the direct inquiry of Edith, with an attempt at indifference. Receiving the desired information, she rejoined :

"I am Miss Cybel Crabtree, and my father is the minister of the first church in Birhampton."

"Indeed!" said Edith, with new interest; "I have some knowledge of your father."

"You have heard him preach?"

"No; I met him on the occasion of an examination of school-teachers."

"Did you ever teach school in Birhampton?" pursued the young lady, coolly.

"I was engaged to teach there; but, on being examined,

your father rejected me," replied Edith, in a straightforward manner, somewhat puzzling to Miss Cybel Crabtree.

"I thought you came from Boston. One of the teachers, who could not remember your name, told me that was your place of residence," said Miss Crabtree.

"My home is in the city at present; but I formerly resided in a town adjoining your own," responded Edith.

"How is that? Did your father remove to the city?" continued Miss Crabtree.

"My parents are both dead."

"Are you derived from a high family?" Miss Cybel was evidently determined to ascertain the exact position of her companion.

"I am derived from a very ancient family," said Edith, strongly reminded of the "derivations" of the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree; "and, as far as I can learn, its members were once unusually high."

"Where did they come from, originally?" pursued Miss Cybel.

"From the place to which they all returned, — the dust of the earth. The first of the family resided a short time in Eden; but, on being expelled for bad conduct, had to work for a living, — a curse which they entailed on all their posterity."

At this Miss Cybel colored slightly; but, unwilling to lose her aim, after a pause, she resumed her interrogations:

"From the fact of your being a pupil in this institution, I

infer that your parents left you with the means of enjoying superior privileges ? ”

“ On the contrary, I found myself in poverty. After the death of my father, I was obliged to work in a factory as a cotton-spinner,” Edith answered, unflinchingly.

It was not her habit, nor did it accord with her sensitive nature, to allude to her past humiliations and afflictions in the presence of others ; but she felt now that she was questioned from unworthy motives, and she had spirit enough to quench such curiosity with a straightforward honesty which she knew would be effectual.

Miss Cybel drew her tall figure up loftily, removed her dress as far as possible from Edith, and carried all her textbooks to the furthest end of the desk. She troubled Edith with no more questions. The next day Miss Cybel Crabtree answered to her name on the opposite side of the hall.

Miss Crabtree’s father had taken great care that as much as possible of his own vast knowledge, derived from various schools, should be crammed into his daughter’s brain, that she might bear the full honors of the family’s “ derivations.” She had ambition, — not ambition which resolves to achieve for itself a success based upon merit alone, but one which expects distinction as a right. This resulted naturally from her education and associations.

She had never been taught that broad and beautiful principle of love for others, which falls from a mother’s lips on the heart of a child as the fresh rain of heaven upon a delicate young plant. There was no genial sweetness gathered within

her heart, like honey-dew in the petals of a flower. The cold, icy-hearted mother had no sunny side, save for her own. Her children were her idols. Like the mother of Zebedee's children, nothing was ever too much or too good for them; and this even at the expense of the dearest interests of others. Upon their hearts she had impressed a lesson of thorough selfishness, with the frequent parenthetical reminder, "You are minister's children." With but very few — the children of the first families, so called — had they associated at all. When one of her daughters married, she ever afterwards, in the presence of others, spoke of and to her by the title of *Mrs.*; which would not have been noticeable, had she not, in addressing other young married ladies of her parish, omitted the title. But, where there is an absence of character that is sufficient to retain respect, to be observant of titles is the best thing one can do.

"A fool, indeed, has great need of a title;  
It teaches men to call him count, and duke,  
And to forget his proper name of fool."

It was, therefore, with no little surprise and annoyance that Miss Cybel Crabtree observed Edith attracting daily more attention than herself. To Edith's explanations and remarks the teachers attended with undisguised respect, and so came to confer with her in preference to any of her class-mates. Miss Cybel redoubled her efforts, and alluded frequently to her father. She would affect to entirely disregard Edith, and, selecting some of the most aristocratic of the pupils, make

merriment over her. With a very few of her own temperament this, for a time, obtained favor; but Edith's universal kindness of heart and sweetness of manner soon established her position beyond dispute. As Edith made no parade of her newly acquired honor and prospective wealth, it was some time before Miss Cybel became aware of her mistake in respect to her real position in the world.

During the subsequent vacation Edith was prevailed upon by Mr. Raymond and Mary to accompany them occasionally within the social circle to which Mary, as the bride of one of the most prominent men, had already been introduced and graciously received. On one of these occasions they attended a *soirée* at the house of a lady who was a leader in society. She attracted the *litterati* about her; for she invariably purchased all their books, read them sufficiently to talk volubly about them, and, what was better, praised them in hearing of the authors themselves. Others, who made no pretensions to authorship, but who were reckoned intelligent readers, she bade to the "feast of reason and flow of soul."

Edith was somewhat awed in presence of so many distinguished people; and, retiring to an obscure corner of the drawing-room, was pleased and interested in silent observation. Mr. Raymond had taken Mary to examine a rare collection of engravings, and, unperceived, Edith had become separated from them. She had not sat thus many minutes before her attention was arrested by the appearance of Hugh Oliver. He was standing by the piano, at which sat a young lady turning music leaves abstractedly, while her attention



was evidently engrossed by him. His arms were folded across his breast, and he leaned negligently against a pillar, glancing from his partially closed eyes upon the young lady with whom he was conversing.

"It is no marvel he is chained to that particular spot," thought Edith, with a trembling, foreboding heart, "that young lady is so beautiful!"

Edith gazed almost breathlessly upon her delicately moulded features; the perfect distribution of color upon her face, like a flush of sunset upon a pure white cloud; her long, luxuriant hair, that swept her neck and bosom in curls; and her eyes, of a soft, languishing blue, which undisguisedly looked love upon Oliver. She was attired with elegance. Her slight, erect figure was set off by a white satin bodice, embroidered in orange colored wreaths. The skirt was a purple velvet, studded with golden bees about the border. She arose to reach another music-book, and, looking coquettishly under Oliver's eyelids, suffered her hand to rest a moment upon his arm, while she murmured a few words.

At this juncture Edith's attention was diverted by the appearance of Mr. Raymond, who had returned in search of her.

"We missed you suddenly," he said. "I have something in the next room, rare and beautiful, to show you. But, what is this which has come over you, all at once?" he added, in a tone of alarm. "You are pale! Are you going to faint?"

"No, no!" replied Edith, with great emotion; "but, tell me, who is that lady at the piano?"

"That is Hada Regleton, your cousin," replied Mr. Raymond; "and there is Hugh Oliver beside her. I must go and speak to him."

"If you please, first lead me from here," said Edith.

Notwithstanding her desire to escape, Oliver's eye had fallen upon them, and in that moment he came up. He soon placed chairs for them, with the evident design to remain.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Raymond; "Mrs. Raymond is awaiting me. If you will entertain Miss Hale while I am away, it will be a favor."

"Not at all," said Oliver, smiling, with awakening interest; "I shall be the debtor myself."

Usually in his presence Edith was embarrassed, so that she seldom appeared with her natural grace of manner; and much more now, as she thought of Hada Regleton.

"You derive interest from this scene, I presume," observed Oliver, familiarly. "No one can fail to be amused, at least, by observing such a peculiar assemblage." Edith bowed assent.

"May I inquire if you are acquainted with any of these people?" he continued. Edith replied that she had only been presented to a few by Mr. Raymond.

"There, by the chimney-piece, is the author of 'Cashmere, — a poem.' A nervous, impassioned man, who sees everything, everybody as though the eyes of Argus were scattered about him, instead of on the tail of the peacock."

"Not the character I should associate with a poet," rejoined Edith, with a smile.

"You think, I suppose, that poets should be melancholy, dreamy, absent, with falling hair, upward-rolling eyes, and with their delicate white hands resting upon their hearts, beating to remarkably fine emotions? Authors seldom correspond to the characters which their readers picture of them from their works. There is scarcely a greater mistake than this, as you will learn by observation of these persons about us. There is a gentleman who is conversing with that knot of ladies. Observe the sparkle of his eye, the keen relish of life which he betrays in the light of their smile. You would now think him one who would be a charming companion,—the very life of the circle, wherever he goes. That is the author of 'The Lament of the Soul.'"

"Is it possible?" returned Edith; "when he strings dismal, die-away verses upon a thread of hopeless melancholy, which one would conclude he was ultimately designing to wind about his own neck, in the character of a suicide!"

"Yes!" said Oliver, looking upon Edith with the old look of admiration; "and here is a lady in a muslin dress, who reminds me of Arachne, who wove a web representing the sins of Jupiter so skilfully, that Pallas first struck her on the head with her shuttle, and afterward changed her into a spider. The most prominent characteristic of this authoress is the art of individualizing; and she is scarcely less skilful than Arachne in weaving out the sins of people into her works."

"Does she, also, share the fate of the goddess?" inquired Edith.

"I rather think she carries an aching head, occasionally, from the blows of those whom she angers. She has, undoubtedly, done much good; but, like all plain dealers, has few friends. Just beyond, you observe a lady who is surrounded by glad faces, and received at every turn with smiles and caresses; at least, by all those that do not envy her too much to show their appreciation. Especially is she admired by the gentlemen."

"She is one of the simplest-dressed here present, and certainly is not beautiful," said Edith.

"No; but she has a mind adorned with brilliancy and worth, like the borders of the pagoda of the Burmese Rath, which are studded with amethysts, emeralds, diamonds, rubies, tourmalines, — and I forget the half, — with drops of amber and crystal interspersed. She has been delving in dark mines for these precious gems; and when, occasionally, as now, she brings them forth to the light of the world, she dazzles and attracts more than all the gayly and expensively dressed ladies about here."

"I thought the gentlemen were attracted by the latter class," remarked Edith.

"Not sensible men," said Oliver.

"It is worth the while, then, for ladies to make an effort to know something beside how to be fashionable?"

"Which you had begun to doubt. I, for one, like women of sense, who will talk, dress, and act sensibly, provided they are not decidedly *blue*."

"There would be more women of this class," said Edith,

"were it not the fault of gentlemen, who generally are beguiled with glitter."

"Perhaps so; but ladies are scarcely less beguiled, as we can prove by observing how closely and fondly is that gentleman in military dress surrounded. And here, very near us, is a kind of amateur author, who appears under a mantle which cost, at least, a thousand dollars; he complains of ill-health, and calls that appendage a necessity. The jewelry upon his person would count up to ten thousand dollars, I presume; perhaps more, for he wears diamonds. The ladies admire him very much, as you can see here, on this occasion."

"What is the character of his writings? I have no slight curiosity to know," said Edith.

"Decidedly opposed to the vanities and pride of life. He writes solemnly against extravagance, and in favor of self-denial; and by those who know nothing of him personally is reckoned a great philosopher — almost a cynic."

At this moment they were interrupted by a gentleman, who came up, and, bowing once and twice very low, said to Oliver:

"I have the honor of wishing you a very good-evening — a charming evening in such intrinsic society as you appear to enjoy yourself at present."

"The time passes pleasantly," said Oliver.

"Yes; we find an homogeneous assembly of intellects of the first water, and of the highest sublime altitude, on this occasion in multijugous frequency. To contemplate all these people exceeds the mysteries of unranoscopy."

On being presented to Edith, he said : " I hope, my dear *mademoiselle*, you are not defatigated with all the varied brilliancy of these noctilucous people."

Edith opened her large eyes a little wider, but did not attempt to reply.

" Directly after these present scones were inchoate," continued the gentleman to Oliver, " I made an earnest endeavor to withdraw myself; but I have almost become oblivious of my original design. Will you do me the great favor to inform me the time? Unfortunately, I left my horologe behind me."

Oliver complied, with as good a grace as possible.

" Indeed ! so late, my dear sir !" he rejoined. " I must defalcate myself immediately," and, bowing low again, walked away, carrying himself so singularly erect, and his head so much bent backward, he seemed to have been made for the express purpose of enjoying " the mysteries of uranoscropy."

" That man," said Oliver, " is easily made out. To speak in his own vein, his *multiloquence* consists of *sesquipedalia verba* — words a foot and a half long."

" And of equally ' sublime altitude,' " said Edith.

" There is an authoress," said Oliver, indicating a lady of middle age, with a face of unusual interest, though devoid of beauty, " who is not in quite so much haste as the personage whom we have just seen. She never hurries. She is writing a work upon which she has labored carefully for six consecutive years; and she told me, a day or two since, it would not be ready for the press in at least two years more."

"She deserves immortality for her patience," said Edith.

"She chooses the right course to win it," observed Oliver ; "seized with the *cacoëthes scribendi*, these writers who hurry through their books, to keep pace with the mad spirit of the age, fail of doing any degree of justice to themselves. Not less true at this day are the words of Cervantes : 'There are some who compose and cast off books as if they were tossing up a dish of pancakes.' The greatest works, of all ages, which have attained immortal fame, were the ripe result of long thought and patient execution. Says Longfellow, that most polished master of his art : 'The secret studies of an author are the sunken piers upon which he is to rest the bridge of his fame, spanning the waters of oblivion.'"

"Without these," said Edith, "books are like the blossoms of the coffee-tree, which last only twenty-four hours."

"And with these," continued Oliver, "a single book may be composed of numerous beauties, each of which is sufficient to be expanded into a book of itself, like the 'browneae' of the tropics, which bear several hundred beautiful flowers in a single thyrsus."

A coarse, grum voice, at this juncture, addressing Oliver, caused Edith to start, and look about her with a new interest. Oliver arose, addressed the lady to whom the voice belonged, and then announced "Mrs. Regleton" to Edith. The lady, being very near-sighted, spoke to Edith without recognition ; but the next moment a new thought evidently arrested her memory.

"What did you give as the lady's name?" she inquired of Oliver, approaching a little nearer to Edith.

It was repeated, with the additional information that she was a relative of Mr. Raymond, and a resident in his family.

Mrs. Regleton flushed deeply, so that the tip of her nose radiated crimson streaks in all directions over her face. She made some slight observation to Oliver, and turned away. Oliver saw that Edith was much moved by this encounter; but, too considerate to venture upon his friendship so far as to make particular inquiries, merely asked if Mrs. Regleton were an acquaintance.

"She is not," replied Edith, with a tremulous tone; "but I have met her before."

Directly after, she observed Mrs. Regleton meet her daughter, and, after a brief communication between them, Hada turned and gazed searchingly upon Edith. Her eye burned with anger upon her, as she saw her in company with Hugh Oliver. With a scornful toss of the head she moved across the room in their direction. But Edith, making some slight apology to Oliver, who was not an inattentive observer of this scene, was gone before Hada had joined him.

"Hugh Oliver is conversational to-night, is he not?" said Mr. Raymond, as Edith came to him.

"I should infer so," replied Edith.

"He is in one of his genial moods, then; sometimes he talks only in monosyllables."

"Very gentlemanly, that," rejoined Edith.

"O, we never expect lions to be like other animals. You



must go to the dandy, brainless and sprightly, for your exquisite."

"I must disagree with you, now," said Edith. "A true, large-souled gentleman, should rather be compared to ——"

"Giraffes?" interrupted Mr. Raymond, with a provoking smile; "who stand so loftily and statuesque, we can but just see them looking down coolly upon us; and, but for a slight movement about their mouths, we should mistake them for stuffed models."

"That represents no real gentleman," said Edith.

"The elephant, then? Because he is a most humble servant, — to the ladies in particular, willingly loaning his back for a vehicle for their convenience; and he is, also, indisputably 'large-soled.'"

Shortly after this, the party prepared to leave. Mr. Raymond and Mary being detained by the hostess a moment, Edith waited in the ante-room. A familiar voice at once fell upon her ear. She turned, and saw Oliver in conversation with Hada Regleton, who was evidently about leaving, also. She held her velvet cap, and trifled abstractedly with it, as she spoke with great spirit. Unperceived herself, Edith could scarcely fail to hear their words.

"Is your informant one in whom you should have confidence?" asked Oliver.

"Certainly. She is one of my own maids, and has formerly lived in Waterbury, — the same place from which this girl came. She told me all these things which I have told

you ; and she has seen her working in a factory with her own eyes."

Edith now turned very pale ; a pain swiftly coursed through her heart ; her lips were parted with a breathless interest.

" And, what is more," continued Hada, " this Edith Hale has been disappointed in love, — actually slighted."

" How know you that, Miss Regleton ?" said Oliver, sternly.

" My maid told me all about it. She was presumptuous enough to fall in love with a young student, or minister, of some sort, who spoke to her now and then. The first she knew he had married a splendid woman of fortune ; and, as a kind of salvo to his conscience, he got her a school somewhere to teach, to keep her off the almshouse, or the lunatic hospital."

Edith started forward with the purpose of speaking for herself ; but Mr. Raymond came that instant.

" Come, Edith, we will go now," he said, taking her arm within his own.

She stood motionless, as if she had suddenly been stricken into stone. Mr. Raymond looked upon her inquiringly ; but her face was already turned away. She saw her cousin continue her relation, with a curve of her delicate lip, and a toss of her head, till the ringlets ran like serpents over her bosom. Her cloak, of delicate swan's down, which she had just thrown on, she had suffered to fall from her shoulders, and she winsomely asked Oliver's assistance. Edith looked no more.

"I am quite ready," she said to Mr. Raymond, with a strong effort suppressing her emotion.

A few days after, Hugh Oliver called at Mr. Raymond's especially to see Edith. But she excused herself. Both Mr. Raymond and Mary insisted in vain.

"I have good reason," she said, "and I am decided."

He called again, and yet other times; but she continued to deny herself, until he ceased to come altogether.

. All this caused Edith many a pang; and often in solitude she wept bitterly. Her only consolation was, that she was saving herself from a greater infliction ultimately.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### RETURN TO WATERBURY.

EDITH was sitting with Mary, one afternoon at the close of summer, engaged upon some sewing, which she had laid aside for the leisure hours of this vacation, and conversing upon topics of mutual interest, when one of the servants appeared with a letter for his mistress. On opening it, Mary found the signature to be that of her mother. But, as her mother had never in her life written to her before, and as she was one of those women who seldom write anything, this letter was wholly a novelty to her. She devoted a long time to its reading; but, finally arousing, as from a dream, she read aloud to Edith, for she had so long habituated herself to seek her confidence, she could not keep silence now. The following is the substance of the letter:

“MY DEAREST CHILD: I suppose you are just as happy as you can be in your new home; but you must not forget your dear sisters, who think of you often, and say a great deal about you. Celesta, dear, poor child! is very unhappy. She

is now at home with her baby. His name is Frederick Clermont Urban Clare, and he has got three teeth. Celesta named him after people she got out of novels. His father calls him Micah ; but he is a brutish man, and turns out not to agree with Celesta in anything. He burnt every novel she had, before they had been married two months. How strange things go in this world ! Now, how well qualified Celesta is for your place ; for she knows all about high life, and likes to associate with genteel people so well ; while you would have just suited her husband. But things always turn out wrong in this sinful state below. Celesta is appreciated by some people, though ; for a young doctor, over where she lives, makes a great deal of her, and has been to visit her several times since she came home. She is n't very well, and he prescribes for her. He is an elegant man, and has such a tender sympathy for her, that he has carried her to ride several times. She says now, since she sees how much she is thought of, that she is sorry she ever saw her husband.

“ Mr. Skerry keeps putting off to marry Claudine, and, all we can do, we can't fetch him to the point. It mortifies her dreadfully ; for all her young friends are marrying, these days. Alitha Dennis was married last week to Mr. Squiers, the lawyer, here. Mr. Loomey married them ; but he is so spiritual, he objects to marrying people very much. I heard he talked with Deacon Dennis a good while against letting his children marry ; and he preached last Sunday upon this text : ‘ I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I.’

"For my part, I am always glad when I see a girl well married. And this makes me think of Maria Weston. I suppose you haven't heard about her. It is very shocking to think how she has turned out. After her father died, last year, she had n't nobody to look after her; and she's been made so much of by some of our first people, it ruined her. The folks where she boarded have turned her away, and nobody in all the place would take her in but old Mr. and Mrs. Linn. How they can have her there, I don't know. No one knows who her seducer is.

"I was going to say before, about Claudine, that I'm sorry now she used Solomon Acre as she did. We hear lately, in the place where he went to off West, he's doing great things. He's bought a lot of land, and speculated on it, so he's made a fortune. To think how she might have had him, and all his money, just as easy as nothing! I tell her to turn off Mr. Skerry; but she won't, because, she says, she loves him. But I should think she had seen enough of such love in Celesta. Julia has gone with Sarah Dennis to school, at Violet Vale Seminary. It takes a sight of money to get her along there, and she teases for more in almost every letter. The worst of it is, your father is in a dreadful state in his business, though he would n't like to have me tell you. I've been thinking of writing you this long, long time; but now I felt as though I could n't put it off any longer. He's driven so hard for money, he says he must wind up soon. I'm sure I have always been just as economical as I could be, and so have the girls. I know it cost a great deal for your sickness last year; so, if

you could only persuade your husband to help your father now, it would be no more than right, certainly. And I think we lost a good deal by your father doing that business for old Mr. Raymond. I never heard him say so, to be sure; but, from that time, he has seemed very much pinched. If your husband gives you any money to spend, you had better save it to send to Julia or Celesta; for they both need a great many things which their father can't get them. You have a sense of duty, I know; so I am satisfied that my advice will not be lost upon you. I hope you will ever use your husband so that he will not get out with you, and I dare say we shall all like him very much. I think it would be a good thing for Celesta to go and spend several months with you; for you know you were always a favorite sister of hers. And we shall all come just as soon as it is convenient. \* \* \*."

When Mary concluded, she saw Edith in tears; for the intelligence concerning Maria Weston had fallen heavily upon her.

"Poor Maria!" she exclaimed, "I always feared this. O, that I had warned her more frequently and earnestly than I did! I must go and see her within this week, before the commencement of next term, or I shall always reproach myself."

"Spoken like yourself, dear Edith," said Mary. "It is not too late for you, who have a strong influence over her, to do her great good. But what do you think of this letter altogether?" she added.

"It is a curious *olla podrida*. Perhaps I should not speak

with so much freedom ; but I must tell what I think, if I speak at all, in reply to your question."

"It strikes me somewhat oddly to read these friendly words from my mother for the first time in my life."

"It is nothing remarkable that your family should be friendly now. Don't you remember how it was with Job?"

Edith took the Bible from the etagere beside her, and, turning to the place to which she had alluded, read aloud: "'The Lord gave Job twice as much as before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread within his house,' etc. However, it is wise to think as kindly of people as we can, notwithstanding the past ; and to impute to every one the purest of motives, so long as by thus doing we may do more good than evil."

"Yes," said Mary ; "few things are more ridiculous than when one is in an improved condition, to conclude that the proffered friendship of people results from motives of self-interest, or that those who stand aloof are brooding over their envy."

As Mary again read that portion of the letter which referred to her father's embarrassments, she was deeply affected in his behalf, and exclaimed,

"If it be possible that I can be instrumental in his assistance, I shall only be too happy that all the predictions concerning me have not proved true."



She lost no time in interceding with Mr. Raymond, whose heart was by no means impervious to her plea.

"We will go immediately and see to these matters ourselves," he said.

Mr. Raymond had endeavored to persuade Mary to accompany him to a fashionable watering-place, and remain during the warm season; but they had deferred the plan for the future, week after week, in anticipation of Edith's vacation, when they might have the increased pleasure of her companionship. But, when that time had come, both Mary and Edith were too happy in the enjoyment of each other's society, without thinking of a more fashionable means of pleasure. Now, therefore, the prospect of a short excursion into the country was regarded by them as a means of peculiar delight.

On the following day, they left home for Waterbury. Mr. Raymond preferred his own travelling carriage to a public conveyance; and early in the morning they rode into the open country, while yet the dew bathed all the earth with freshness. Before they were aware, a view of the village of their destination, between the trees, broke on their sight.

The morning had grown into a golden day, — not brazen and oppressive, but serene and beautiful. The quietude of the country made it like a dream of heaven.

Edith and Mary gradually fell into silence, with the sight of old, familiar scenes of home again. Many sad and darkened memories of the past now brooded heavily over their hearts; and the present seemed suddenly to have been trans-

ferred to some dim, distant future. The phantoms of the olden time held their souls in awe.

The clock upon the Waterbury church repeated its twelfth stroke as they turned upon the main street, and with those world-calling sounds, so important in the country, Edith and Mary awoke, as from a dream, to the spectacle of people leaving their places of business, and little, glad-hearted children hurrying home to their dinners from the deserted school-room.

"How natural this all seems!" exclaimed Edith; "and yet, in some sense, it has grown unfamiliar; for, in the single year of my absence, my heart has received so many new impressions, the lines of the past look not as they used to."

"Nor will they ever again," said Mr. Raymond; "those lines are broken or crossed by others, more prominent to the mind's eye than those which are beneath; and the web of life, in which are woven new and more tangled threads every year, no art can restore to its original simplicity."

It was evening before Edith started for the house of Mr. Linn, for she knew that she could not meet Maria at an earlier time, on account of her labor in the factory. As she approached the old, familiar spot, a chill struck across her heart, which held her almost breathless. She paused a few moments, and sat down upon a large rock by the side of the lane to compose herself. The moon had just risen above the strip of wood that skirted the meadow beyond the house, defining the outlines of the tree-tops distinctly upon the sky. It seemed to glance down upon the old place with solemn

cognizance, casting all about it a soft and tranquil light, as though it were holy ground. But even then, unknown unto its aged keepers, who for so many years had lived by prayer and faith, a serpent in human form lurked among the dark, spectral shadows of the old trees which stood just behind the house. None knew it save his victim, whom he had long since wiled within his fatal coils.

With a loving eye Edith marked the brown well-sweep before the side-door, to which led out the path of broad, even stones, rimmed thickly with moss and grass, where she had trodden so many times in bygone days, and wondered if the silver resonance of a laugh would come up from the crystal depths as musically as then. There, too, were the bee-hives under the apple-trees; and, a little further on, she could faintly discern the garden-patch whither she had so often gone with old Mrs. Linn to assist her in the weeding of the long, boarded beds of balm, fever-few, sage, and a great many other useful herbs, as well as those in which grew the pansies, pinks, and holly-hocks. An old rock, on which she had cultivated some houseleeks and a nasturtion, she could see standing solemnly under the face of the moon. As she mused, an evening breeze swayed the old trees, and thriddled the leaves of the columbine which grew beside, and over the door, even to the low roof, till they trembled and whispered together. It swung also the old gate opening into the meadow, which stood ajar, so that it creaked hoarsely.

At this juncture, she perceived two figures emerge from the shadow of the trees, and slowly, almost stealthily, advance

up the lane towards where she was sitting. She heard the sound of their voices, as they spoke in a suppressed tone. One of the figures, whom by his voice she distinguished as a man, was evidently urging the other to accompany him, contrary to inclination. She heard a sad, low voice in reply, which she at once recognized. It was Maria; but her companion she could not identify, for he wore a hat with a wide, slouched brim, which entirely concealed his face; and, notwithstanding the season, his person was shrouded in a dark cloak, which well-nigh swept the ground.

"If we go to the cemetery, we can talk together there, and be certain no one will overhear us," said the deeper voice.

Edith started involuntarily from the shadow in which she sat, as they were about to pass, and outstretched her hand to Maria. Her face was turned to the full light of the moon, and Maria knew her at once.

"Can this be you, Miss Edith?" she cried, sinking upon her knees before her, and bursting into tears.

"Yes, Maria," said Edith; "go with me back to the house, will you not? I have come on purpose to see you."

She looked about, to confront her companion; but he had walked on swiftly, and, in a moment more, with a single bound had cleared the wall by the way, and was proceeding hurriedly in a direction away from the village.

"Did you see him, so as to know who it was?" asked Maria, anxiously.

"No," said Edith.

"Heaven be praised! My disgrace is nothing to what his would be," rejoined Maria.

Edith drew Maria's arm within her own, and led her to the house; for she was so overcome she was scarcely able to walk alone.

"I will go to your room first," said Edith; "afterwards I will see Mr. and Mrs. Linn."

In Maria's chamber Edith found a light burning, and everything indicated that she had but late gone out. On the table lay an open Bible.

"That is right," said Edith, pointing toward the book; "you cannot have a better friend."

"I see Mr. and Mrs. Linn read a great deal in the Bible," said Maria, "so I try to read it; but it don't do me any good."

Edith looked upon her in sad surprise.

"I feel so guilty!" added Maria, with deep emotion.

"The Bible is the book for us all — and we are all sinners," said Edith.

"If I could only pray," said Maria, "I should n't feel so badly; but I can't. It seems as though the heavens were shut against me."

"We should never, under any circumstances, neglect prayer. 'The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear,'" said Edith, in a voice of tenderest pity.

Maria covered her face with her hands, as she said, in a

tone which seemed a wail of a broken heart, "O, that I could hide myself from God!"

Edith turned the leaves of the Bible, until she read, with kindred passages, "'The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.' Will you not try to do this, Maria?"

"It is too late now!" she said.

"I will pray with you, dear Maria," said Edith; and the two girls, so widely different in all things, knelt side by side, while the voice of fervent prayer ascended to heaven. That was a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, — a sacrifice but few, though kindly and benevolent, would make, — and it was sealed by the recording angel in imperishable letters of gold!

Maria was moved to many tears, and a peace possessed her heart such as she had not known for a long time of wretchedness. Afterward, Edith spoke to her of the future before her, warning, advising, and encouraging, in all the fervor of true sympathy.

"I have but one hope!" said Maria. She hesitated, as if unwilling, through shame, to reveal it.

"It is a good one, I trust," said Edith, encouragingly.

"But one thing lights up the gloomy future before me — a promise of marriage from him who has thus led me astray. Were it not for this, I would lie down hopelessly and die."

"Earnestly do I hope that promise may be fulfilled," said Edith; "and, if it be possible for me to do anything to assist you in bringing this about, I shall be glad to exert myself

in your behalf, or secure the aid of some friend more powerful."

"No, no," replied Maria, anxiously; "that is impossible. No one knows who this man is, or must know. Should I tell his name, all hope would be lost."

Edith now said she would leave her, as the evening was wearing away.

"O! no, — not yet," sobbed Maria; "though I suppose you are tired. But it seems so pleasant to hear your voice again, and to see you look with pity on me now! God bless you for this act a thousand times, Miss Edith! Scarcely one of my old friends speaks to me now, except those blessed people in this house; they are all goodness to me always."

"You know," said Edith, "that you cannot expect, in reason, all people to receive you to their friendship as formerly."

"No," said Maria; "but there are some people who are respected by everybody, and yet have done as wickedly as I, and worse; for they are the deceivers, while I have been cruelly deceived."

"Admitting what you say is true," continued Edith, "you do not think that the public are aware that such are guilty."

"I suppose not; — no."

"Then such conduct should be attributed to misapprehension and ignorance of the truth, rather than to any worse motive."

"But I get so near despair when I think of all this!" pursued Maria, clasping her hands tightly. "For one false step,

I, a poor girl, have lost my character forever. I must be thrust down lower and lower, while they, year after year, will rise higher and higher, because they are strong, and great, and powerful."

"Know one thing," said Edith; "the way of the transgressor, whoever he may be, or whatever position he may hold, is hard."

"If I only knew for a truth," said Maria, recurring to herself again, "that this promise he has made me would soon be fulfilled, I should be too thankful to survive it, it seems to me."

"I will pray that you be not disappointed in this," said Edith; "but I advise you to make a friend of some one here, and get legal assistance in bringing it about as soon as possible."

"That cannot be," said Maria; "the very thought of such a thing overwhelms me with fear. He has told me, if I let out his name, he would leave me forever; but, if I would wait patiently till it was possible for him to marry me in some place a good way off, I should not be disappointed. So I have nothing left to do, but to cry, and wait, and hope."

"Maria," said Edith now, very solemnly, as she took her hand, "I shall not see you again, perhaps, in a long time, for my engagements will be such as to prevent my coming to Waterbury often; but, whatever befalls you, remember that I am praying for you. I hope you will never again omit to pray for yourself. Do not trust in man, especially in one who has once betrayed you. I am an orphan like yourself,



and I speak from a blessed experience when I say, 'our help cometh from the Lord;' under his protection only can we dwell safely."

"If I had only felt this before!" sobbed Maria.

"It is never too late, not even at the eleventh hour, to feel the blessed influence of the truth."

Edith silently laid a purse of money upon the table on the open Bible.

"You are too good, but I cannot take it," said Maria, decidedly.

"I will leave it with what I shall give Mrs. Linn."

"You may give to her, if you like, but not to me. I feel how kind you are."

By an unconscious impulse, as she was going out, Edith turned and looked once more upon Maria. The poor girl's eyes met hers, while the tears rained down her pale, sunken cheeks, and her hands remained clasped tightly together. Edith could not withstand that look. It seemed to her like a new and sudden revelation of all Maria's anguish, and, for the first time during that painful interview, she wept. No words could she speak now; and, gliding out, she gently closed the door behind her.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A SURPRISE.

ON the following morning, Mr. Raymond proposed to Mary and Edith that they should ride with him out into the open country. The quiet enjoyment, which he so much desired on leaving the city, seemed somewhat doubtful in the atmosphere of Mrs. Pickering, who exerted herself to win his favor, with all her habitual affectations. Edith could not accept her invitation, as she had allotted to herself to spend the morning in the cemetery, around the spot where slept the earthly remains of her parents. So they left her to wander there alone, while they proceeded on their ride. She had not visited this spot, sacred to so many solemn and painful associations, since the brightness of a better fortune had dawned upon her days. She had last left there many sighs and tears, and, as she once more trod the path which led to the home of the beloved dead, a memory, distinct and strong, of all the overwhelming past, struck her heart with gloom and sadness.

The evergreens about the ground of her own dead had grown rapidly the past year; and she now set about trimming them to forms of symmetry and beauty. The task was not an

easy one, and the time fled rapidly as she was thus employed. There were also weeds and grasses to put away from the paths, and some other improvements to make.

At length, considerably wearied, she sat down by the headstone, for rest. The stillness of the spot, with the monotonous chirp of the crickets around, soothed and lulled her senses, until, like a gentle breath of south wind, which sighs itself away among the clouds, she fell asleep. As she slept, her dreams of the past, when she had lived in her old home with her parents, overcast all her face, so lately saddened by mournful thoughts, with a beaming smile.

There was one who beheld that smile with a sympathetic influence — one who could not look on the sleeper unmoved. Just without the enclosure, an eye of admiration took in the lovely picture with a long, enraptured glance. As thus Edith lay, her head resting against the stone, and in part upon her hand, with the uncovered arm draped above the elbow with a light fall of lace, while her cheek was glowing with the late exercise she had taken, and, shaded by her long, dark eye-lashes, contrasted with the white marble beside it, in exceeding beauty; her lips were delicately parted, as if inspired with a holy, happy thought; her hair, escaped from its confinement in part, fell down in careless ripples over her neck, like the shadow of a cloud upon a pearly sea; and a few white lilies, she had gathered that morning, and wound their long stems about the sash of her waist, now drooped over the folds of her mourning-dress, even to her feet.

A voice now gently broke the silence, pronouncing her

name. She awoke suddenly, and gazed in affright about her.

"What is it?" she whispered, involuntarily, as she beheld nothing.

"It is not one who has risen from the dead," said the intruder, now disclosing himself fully to her view.

"O, I am so frightened!" she exclaimed. But she could say no more. Her face had taken a hue that bore but little contrast with the marble, now.

"Dear Edith — Miss Hale, do you not recognize me — your old friend? Speak once again, for the love of heaven! Have I killed you?" he said, advancing toward her.

"No, no!" she murmured. "But is it a dream? It cannot surely be that you are here."

"Be assured it is a reality, dear Edith," said Hugh Oliver. "Excuse me for my familiarity; but you look so white and startled, I am beside myself, I believe."

Edith could say nothing in reply; so she remained motionless, while he sat down beside her, and placed his arm about her form for support.

"I owe you a thousand apologies for this intrusion," he resumed, after a moment's embarrassment had passed; "and I will try and explain, if you will be gracious enough to listen. I am at present making a short stop at my uncle's, where Mr. and Mrs. Raymond called this morning, upon their ride; and we persuaded them to spend the remainder of the day with us, provided you could be induced to join them.

And so I came in person, with my uncle's compliments, to bring you."

"I believe I must be excused," replied Edith, in confusion.

Oliver looked disappointed; his dark eyes fell upon her searchingly. But, when he saw she wore an expression of timidity, rather than disinclination, he said:

"Why is it, Miss Hale? Of late you shun me, altogether."

Edith drooped her head so low, that her face was concealed under her bonnet; for the tears had rushed to her eyes unbidden.

"The mystery is, why you should seek me," she said, at length.

"I do not understand you," said Oliver.

She looked up hastily, and he saw her emotion with surprise. Taking her hand within his own, he held it for some minutes in silence.

"If you do not go with me," he resumed, "I shall infer that you cannot pardon this intrusion."

"Then I will accept your agreeable invitation," she replied, making an effort to rise. But he detained her, apparently in no haste to leave.

"I must first return to the house, where I am stopping, which will occupy a few minutes," she said, as an inducement to him to be gone.

"How beautiful is this place!" he rejoined. "Here the hollow forms of the world are as a mockery, and heart speaks to heart."

"Yes, if it be possible for the spirits of the dead to commune with the living," said Edith.

"She has wilfully misinterpreted me," thought Oliver; "and she loves another, else she would not display so much indifference."

He arose coldly, and accompanied Edith from the cemetery. He had not been misunderstood; but Edith's first lesson in worldly wisdom had enabled her to control herself. She believed that Oliver was only using the language of friendship to win her regard for the time, and then banish the entire memory of her at convenience. She therefore determined not to let her heart cling with hope upon his attentions. But nothing was more difficult than to adhere to this determination.

After this, during their ride, Oliver was as indifferently polite as even Edith, in her distrust, could have desired. Then, believing she had judged rightly, she threw off her restraint, and became carelessly happy, to appearance.

"Dear me!" said Mary, aside to her, after her arrival at Major Oliver's, "you look, for all the world, as if it were nothing that a man like Hugh Oliver had been attending you. He manifested a great deal of pleasure when Horace consented to let him go for you."

"Gentlemen are all deceitful, save, perhaps, your husband," replied Edith.

"What a decided misanthrope! I must try and teach you better," said Mary.

Edith shook her head. She was received by the major

with great impressiveness. He inquired with interest after her welfare, and spoke of the unmeasured regard in which he had held her parents, particularly her father, with whom he had been chiefly acquainted.

"Your mother," said he, "I knew only partially; but I recollect her as a perfectly accomplished woman, in the best sense of the term."

Edith thanked him amid her tears.

"She has sensibility, and is easily moved, it seems," said Hugh Oliver, to himself, as he observed her; "but the difficulty is, I have no power to touch her heart."

He believed he understood the hearts of all women whom he attempted to study. The truth was, he had so much of his life been an earnest and absorbed thinker and student upon other subjects, he knew but very little of that he professed in this respect. Of one thing he was certain; no woman should ever be made aware of his love, until he was first convinced her affections were unreservedly his own. But many things of which a person is certain at one period of life become exceedingly problematical at another.

The major soon asked his guests to his dining-room, to partake of a simple repast, which he always had prepared, to divide the hours between breakfast and dinner. Mr. Raymond and the ladies excused themselves.

"I shall take no excuse," he rejoined; "for you have just been riding in this fresh morning air, and a little fruit can do you no injury. Besides, I have no respect for these laws which forbid one, if ever so hungry, to eat a mouthful till the

prescribed time. Come, Hugh, I resign Miss Hale to your care, while I shall attend to Mrs. Raymond and her husband."

They found the hospitable board was graced with dishes all of glass, as the major never used a service of any material more substantial at this meal. In these were sliced peaches prepared with ice-cream, baked pears and apples, with bowls and pitchers of milk, bread like a light snow-fall, and delicious cakes. A transparent vase, filled with large golden and purple plums, stood in the centre.

After this repast had been sufficiently discussed, it was proposed by Hugh to take a walk to a high hill in the neighborhood of his uncle's house, and observe the fine, extensive prospect from that point. To this all gladly assented; for the day was not very warm, and the sun had been partially clouded for some hours.

And so the hours fled on amid the pleasing variety, until our party took leave of their agreeable entertainers. On their return, they called upon Father Shaw and Miss Leah. Father Shaw inquired abruptly of Edith if she were going to be married.

"Ye see," he commented, "ye went a ridin' 'long by, this forenoon, as park as a bird, with a man that looked as ef he might do for a husband for ye; and I think there's somethin' in 't."

"O, no, sir!" said Edith, "I have no such idea."

"Yes, yes, that's the story in all the gals' mouths; they've no idee of marryin' to the last. But I don't see why they need to be so desatful."



"I trust that Edith will not throw herself away," observed Miss Leah, in her usual curt manner.

"There's no use of allers bein' 'fraid of gettin' thrown away; though I like to see a gal careful, and look well afore she jumps," said Father Shaw.

"I thank you for your advice," said Edith; "but I have no occasion to use it at present."

"Ye can lay it away, then, in a corner of yer heart, till ye want it; but don't let it be so long as to let the moths eat it."

Other characteristic remarks the old man made to Mr. Raymond about life in the city, and to Mary, counselling her to be a good mother; all of which were received with the same kindly spirit in which they were intended.

The next day, they left Waterbury, on their return; and their ride was not less replete with interest than before; for the vacant seat in Mr. Raymond's carriage was occupied by Hugh Oliver, who had accepted an invitation, given the previous day, to return with them to town.

Arriving home, Edith found a letter addressed to herself, which caused her a variety of emotions. It read thus:

"This letter, which you have now opened, is from your uncle. You have heard your mother speak of her brother, who left home many years ago, and never returned. I am he. I have come back poor and lame, so I have nothing as an inducement for you to come to me. But, if you wish to see me, you will find me in a little, old house, the way to which I enclose.

Yours, &c.,

"JOHN PLAISTED."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### EDITH'S UNCLE.

THIS letter was to Edith as a voice from the dead. Her heart overflowed with joy that she had found a relative of whom her mother had often spoken so affectionately, and she lost no time in answering its summons in person. The place indicated as the residence of her uncle she discovered, after a circuitous search, in one of the suburbs not far from the city. It was truly a humble spot, but picturesque in location, being so elevated as to command a view of the surrounding cities and of the water.

With a trembling heart she tapped upon the door. No answer being returned, she attempted a second knock, when she heard the window from the attic upraised, and a voice say, "Who is there?"

"If you are Mr. Plaisted, you will know me as your niece to whom you wrote yesterday," Edith responded.

"The Holy Prophet! the Khan of Samarcand!" exclaimed the voice; "I will be down there quicker than an ostrich will swallow a red-hot bullet."

As he was opening the door, Edith heard her uncle shout,

"I did n't make out to come so quick as I thought for, child. I am lame."

When the door was finally opened, Edith saw before her a man, apparently of sixty years, of medium height, white hair falling to his shoulders, with a thick beard covering his bosom, and a stern, intelligent countenance, greatly bronzed.

"Is this indeed my uncle — the brother of my mother!" she exclaimed.

"By the beard of the prophet! I see my sister Edith again just as she looked when I left home, years and years ago!" he said, while he studied Edith's countenance with intense interest.

"It all comes back to me as though 't were yesterday," he continued, with an effort suppressing his emotion, and in a voice that seemed the echo of years; "she was young and beautiful, and I loved her well. She has gone, but left her image behind. The great God of gods be thanked for this!"

"Dear uncle," said Edith, much moved, "you can scarcely know how rejoiced I am that I have found you. My sainted mother said, on the day she died, 'If my dear brother were only living now, I could leave you in peace; but I will trust God for your protection.'"

"How like your mother are your words, manner, everything!" he said, as if this idea took precedence of all others.

The tears came to Edith's eyes; for this new revelation of love had come to her with an overwhelming power.

"Then you are really glad to see me, Dithy?" said her uncle.

"Dithy!" repeated Edith, unable to comprehend his meaning.

"Yes; I used to call your mother Dithy, and I must call you so; no other name will do for me."

"As you please," said Edith; "but why, dear uncle, should I not be glad to see you, when you are the one whom my mother dearly loved and mourned?"

"I am poor, Dithy; a reason enough, the world through, why you should not care for me. Had I brought home with me gold, diamonds, brocades, and other costly stuffs, such as travellers from the East often bring, it might be worth the while to see me."

"I hope I am not one who estimates such splendor above pure and fervent love," said Edith.

"Then you are not like your kinsfolk, Dithy!" Perceiving that Edith did not comprehend him, he added: "After my arrival in this country, I went first to see my sister Sarah, your Aunt Regleton; and should n't you suppose she would have been glad to meet once more her only brother, who had been as good as dead for a long time?"

"It would seem natural, certainly," replied Edith.

"But what, think you, she did, after I had made myself known to her? She neither fainted, nor laughed, nor cried for joy, but merely said, 'Have you come home wealthy, John?' I need not say I was somewhat surprised at this question, when I had expected several others first, under the

circumstances. It is something to be poor, and something more to own the fact; but I told her at once that I had been unfortunate, and had no money with which to bribe her friendship. 'Another poor relation turned up, then!' she murmured, coldly. If an alligator had sprung out from under where I sat, I should not have been more struck with astonishment to find my sister meet me in such a way. 'Only a short time ago,' she went on, 'Edith's child came here, poor, and supposing I would help her.' — 'Edith's child destitute?' I asked. — 'Her mother is dead. She married against our father's will, and so was disinherited — right enough, too. She died in great poverty, as she might have expected. Her child is a kind of a protégée to a family here in town, I hear. I inquired into it, but could learn nothing satisfactory.' — 'Then father left all his property to you?' I said. — 'What if he did? I am not responsible for everybody's misfortunes; I had no idea of taking in, as an equal to my daughter, the child of a poor, nameless upstart.' — 'My misfortunes shall not trouble you,' I put in, rising on my limping leg. — 'You should have done better, John, than this,' she said, 'looking me over scornfully. — 'Should I, supposing I could not help what has come upon me?' I answered. — 'Well,' said she, with a deep breath, 'you are my brother, and I can't see you suffer. My husband may find you some work to do in his store. But you had better, for my sake, not tell people how it is.' — 'No,' said I, 'I will be sure and not tell anything to injure you or yours; but I do not need any help from you at present, I will get work somewhere else.' — 'Whatever I do for you

will be a free gift, you know ; as father, supposing you were dead, gave all his estate, without reservation, to me.' — 'You are kind,' I replied, and went out of her house with curses on my lips, for a very Arab could not have shown more selfishness than my own sister. But, Dithy, I have cried, — yes, I, who have not felt a tear upon my sunburnt cheeks for long years, have cried as I did when a boy, — as I thought this scene all over again and again, here by myself. Sometimes I think it all a dream, and I will go to her again. But, by the Grand Lama, I never can go, if I come to starve for a crust ! ”

“ You shall not ever want, dear uncle ! ” exclaimed Edith, with earnest affection ; “ it so happens that I have property in prospect, and whatever I have shall be shared with you, willingly.”

“ God bless you, child ! ” he replied, much moved ; “ but I thought you were unprovided for, from what your aunt said.”

“ After my father's death, I was quite destitute until recently, when an unexpected event occurred that changed all the current of my life, the circumstances of which I will reserve to tell you at some future time. At my request, my improved prospects have been kept chiefly unknown to others than those immediately interested.”

“ I thought I would see if you would meet me as Sarah did ; but, if I had known you had not been poor, I believe I should have hesitated to make the experiment. I have long noticed that good fortune hardens people's hearts. I told you in the beginning how it was with me, that there might be

no mistake. I am sorry it is so, for it would have been mighty comfortable to have come home heavy with gold and merchandise ; but this world is a queer place, and long ago I learned we can't have what we want in it."

Edith took the old man's hand, and pressed it reverently to her lips. After a pause, she said :

"Now, dear uncle, you must suppose I am very anxious to know something of your past history in the silent interim between your departure and return. We have had so much to say, I could not inquire before."

"It is a long story, Dithy," he said, "and made up of many adventures, which I shall tell you in good time ; for every traveller returns rich in experience, if in no other commodity."

He then rapidly, in his own terse, graphic manner, sketched the outline of his adventures ; — how he had been captured by a pirate on the Mediterranean ; sold as a slave in Constantinople, where he remained for some years ; with his merchant-master crossed the Black Sea to Soldain in the Crimea, from whence they proceeded to St. Serai, where he subsequently escaped from his master, and was detained by the khan of those dominions ; how, after writing several letters home, and waiting in vain for a response, and, on account of the war at that time, unable to return, he joined a party of travellers, and wandered over many of the countries of Asia ; was next wounded by Arab robbers, and enslaved again for many years, and in their service twice journeyed across the Great Desert ; and, finally escaping once more, he reached a port

from which he embarked for England, and from thence to his native land.

"How much, during all this, you must have endured!" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes, more than I once should have imagined I was capable of. I should have died, or been killed, a hundred times, had I not been ordered to live out my appointed time; for, whatever I disbelieve, I have no doubt in a fate which will work itself out, despite all things. But I have cursed my fate more times than I have lived years."

Edith looked sadly surprised now, for her ears were all unused to such words.

"Was that quite right, uncle?" she ventured, kindly.

"Right or wrong, I have done so, and would again in like situations. There is no sense or justice in making a man go through what I have been obliged to."

"In all the trials I have seen," said Edith, "and I think, for a young girl, I have been called to some affliction, I have tried to remember that it was for the best,—that God ordained it for my good and his glory."

"I know nothing about such doctrine as that," said her uncle, impatiently.

Edith was still more surprised; the thought occurred to her, "Had her uncle experienced such a long life of vicissitude without any anchor for his trust, any recognition of the beacon-light above to guide his perilous way?"

"Don't look so sober, Dithy," now spoke her uncle, lightly.

"I have seen the operation of a great many religions over



the world, and for no one at present do I entertain a preference. There is not much to choose between the practice of going a pilgrimage to Mecca, and there sacrificing forty thousand camels to fill the bellies of the poor, shaving the head, and throwing stones at the devil's eyes, as do the Mahometans; or, of writing a prayer upon a board and licking it off with the tongue, as some of the African tribes worship; or, abstaining from eating pork and drinking wine, like the Jews; or, adoring the planets, beasts, birds, fishes, and stones, &c., as do the pagans; or, laboring through all the senseless forms of worship, like the Christians. What I have seen and heard in Christian churches, pagan temples, Islam mosques, and Jewish synagogues, did not amount to much difference; fooleries there were in all, about alike."

"O, uncle!" said Edith, sorrowfully, "these words greatly disappoint me. Is there any Bible like ours? As one of the inspired prophets said, 'What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you?' &c. Did your mother never teach you the simple but beautiful prayer of our Lord?"

"Yes; but what of that?"

Edith was sadly at a loss now to express herself as she would; for it was a new experience to her to meet a mind which had wandered so far from the first principles of her faith.

"If you see no excellence in such prayer, I am sure, uncle, you must be very unhappy," she said. "It is not possible that you have lived all these years without prayer to God!"

"Dear child," replied her uncle, — "simple child, I must call you, for you have seen nothing of the world, and know comparatively nothing, — are not all these peoples of whom I have spoken religious, and do they not all pray to God in their several forms? Yet they all alike sin, die, and perish to the dust. This religion of yours may do for a woman, weak and narrow-minded, to live by; but I want, my child, that your mind should become liberal, broad as the earth itself, and high as God himself, and not bound down to the mere atoms in the scale of thought."

"And I want, dear uncle, that you should be happy," said Edith; "for I am quite sure there is little real consolation in such belief as yours. Such principles are no rock on which to ground your trust when the rains descend and the winds of adversity beat against you." Edith paused, too much affected to proceed; beside, she was afraid to speak what was in her heart.

"Look here, Dithy," he said, at length, "I have a few trinkets, curiosities I saved to bring home with me; and these I will show you, of my humble store. So, cheer up, child; it does not become you to mope in this way over Gospels and the like, at your time of life. Leave such stuff to priests till the days of your gray hairs."

He limped up the low flight of stairs to the attic above, from which, after considerable delay, he brought down a box. In this he displayed several curious articles, which, he said, were not valuable in themselves, but possessed interest from

local associations, and from their manufacture or natural construction.

"There is a stone," said he, "I have kept among my adventures, of no great value, but rather beautiful. It was given me by the Great Khan of Tartary, as a curious stone, possessing the art of healing."

Edith saw that it was a stone of a brilliant red color, an inch square, and of corresponding thickness.

"It is very beautiful, certainly," said Edith. "What kind of a stone is it?"

"O, a mere red, shining stone, as you see. Here are pieces of sandal-wood, both red and white. Here are some other stones, of pretty colors, I picked up in various parts of the world; of many I have been robbed, but I contrived to save a few. In fact, I have a passion for such collections. Every man has his whims, you know. Here are some cowries; some dried kouskous from the banks of the Niger; a piece of singularly carved ivory; a root of ginseng; a Hottentot's pipe. If you have a fancy for any of these things, — the pretty stones, for instance, — I will give them to you, some day."

Edith thanked him, and added, with some embarrassment, "If you will receive in exchange some money, uncle."

"O, for that matter," said he, "I can get along at present. I hope now to get a situation in some mercantile establishment, where my knowledge of foreign affairs will be valuable. If I can earn only a very little, it will be enough, as my wants are simple and few."

"I had some money left after the death of my mother,"

said Edith, "and it is quite at my own disposal. "If you would take this until I come in possession of my property, dear uncle, I should be glad."

"Good child!" said the old man, busying himself closely about his box; "but you need not assist me at present. I brought home a few valuable bales of merchandise that fell into my hands at Cathay, the proceeds of which will support me for some time, with my frugal habits. After that is gone, and if I can get me no business, I will let you know, if I am in need. As I have said, I feel sorry that I am not more able to gladden the hearts of my kin, after this long absence."

"Do not talk thus," said Edith; "else I shall begin to despair of ever convincing you that I, for one, am rejoiced to see you."

After looking at some other curiosities of her uncle's collection, Edith prepared to leave. But, before going, her uncle requested her to tell him about her present manner of life; and, as she made some incidental allusions to the past, he was affected, sometimes to grief, sometimes to anger, in which Spanish profanity mingled largely.

"Well, Dithy, we have got very well acquainted for the first meeting," he said, as she concluded, "and I hope you will not forget to come and see your poor old uncle as often as you can. There's nothing here to attract a young person away from the great world, to be sure; but I can tell you some stories, by and by, which may interest you somewhat. Then, too, I shall want to hear all the particulars of your past life with your mother and father."

"I had nearly forgotten to inquire how it is you manage housekeeping," said Edith; "have you no one on whom you depend for this?"

"O! no; I am an old, experienced traveller, you know: and I have taken care of myself so long, I am at no loss now. I can cook, make, and mend, quite to my purpose, I assure you."

Edith smiled a little incredulously.

"I am fearful you cannot make yourself comfortable here in this way," she said. "Will you not consent to take lodgings in some pleasant boarding-house, if I will meet the expense?"

"No, Dithy; I take comfort here by myself. After such a wild and wandering life as I have led, I should feel as much out of place, among fine people, as a fish out of water."

"Then I will come to you as often as possible, and assist you in whatever you will permit me," said Edith, as he offered his storm-beaten cheek for her parting kiss.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### EVENTS OF A DAY.

EDITH faithfully performed her promise, visiting her uncle frequently, and always bringing with her something which she thought would contribute to his comfort. There was a charm in his society which attracted her powerfully; for he seemed like some curious, quaint specimen, brought from a distant, unknown clime. That there was a great lack in his character she felt more and more with every interview; but her faith in the efficacy of prayer, that this lack might some time be supplied, was simple and childlike, yet far-reaching and powerful.

Upon a Saturday when she was released from her usual school duties, Mr. Raymond proposed, as he had business in a place some miles out of the city, which would occupy him during the day, that Mary and Edith should accompany him. Mary readily accepted the invitation, but Edith had set upon that day to spend with her uncle.

"I would gladly go with you," she said, "if I had not promised to make him a visit to-day; I have been so much

occupied, of late, as to prevent me from going to him, and I would not like to disappoint him."

"Well, then, you must return in good season, to spend the evening with us," said Mary.

"Yes," said Mr. Raymond; "we shall be back in the early evening train, and we will have tea together, after which I will read from the new book I brought in yesterday."

Edith assisted Mary in her preparations for leaving, as they chatted pleasantly of their several prospects for the day; and they kissed each other so affectionately when they separated, that Mr. Raymond laughingly said,

"One would think you were about to be parted a year, instead of a day."

It was a pleasant picture to Edith as she stood at the window and saw them ride away, and their smiles of love upon her lighted up all her heart with radiance.

"How beautiful dear Mary looks this morning!" she said to herself; "and how glad I am so much real, rare happiness has at last fallen to her lot! I used to think there was no justice in fortune in this world; but, when I look on these splendid scenes around me, and know that peace presides over all, I almost believe that Heaven bestows superior blessings, even on earth, upon her favored children."

She reflected much on these things as she took her way to her uncle's cottage; but, when she saw his gladdened face at her coming, she had no thought but for her happiness at the meeting.

"Dear uncle!" she said, "I am afraid you are getting

lonesome; but I have come to spend the whole day with you, if you like."

"That is right, Dithy," he said. "I was thinking perhaps you were getting tired of coming to see such a poor old man as I. But you are good to come at all, with all your other cares."

"It is getting to be cold weather," said Edith, "and I wish to try and make some arrangements for your comfort. You know you are unused to our severe climate in winter, and I have been sewing some flannels for you." And she produced several nice garments, which were the result of her own industry.

The old man looked upon her with loving eyes, but he had no words to reply.

"Then I must introduce some improvements in your home, here," she continued; "I hope you will not object to my making it as comfortable as possible."

"No, child; but I dare say things appear very different to you and me. Now, that dust upon the table I know you will not let remain there long; but I harbor no ill-will to that sort of thing. It serves me for a tablet on which to cast up accounts."

"An original idea!" said Edith.

"No, child, not new at all; for you must know the people of some of the countries in the world have their tables and buffets plated with gold, on which they let the dust accumulate, so that upon such a surface they may write and draw mathematical figures."



"I had no idea that the practice of letting dust remain upon furniture was so respectable," said Edith. "But why do you suffer those unsightly pieces of wood to grace your chimney-shelf, uncle?"

"Don't take them away, child," said her uncle; "they are my lamps."

"How is that?" asked Edith, in surprise.

"Can't you tell a pine-knot, Dithy? I usually go to sleep early; but, if I happen to want a light, I burn that. I am poor, and can't afford the luxury of oil or gas. Beside, I am used to this way of doing, and like it."

"I hope you will let me supply you with something better," said Edith.

"Many a time," continued her uncle, "I have not been so well provided as this. I have often resorted to fire-flies for a light."

"How could you catch them?"

"From a bird, which takes fire-flies alive and fastens them with moistened clay to the side of its nest, for a light at night."

"That was rather unmerciful, it strikes me," said Edith.

"The bird, or me?"

"Both," Edith replied.

"One part of the world always make the other serve as fire-flies to light their own nests with. If you could show me any religion that would bring about a better order of things, I would pay some devotion to it. But you have fire-flies in your Christian nest, as much as in any other."

"I am not quite certain of your meaning, uncle."

"I mean that you Christians number people who are tyrannical, and who make others subservient to their own interests. Before I left this country I remember making observations to this effect; and I dare take an oath, by the beard of the prophet, the state of things here in this respect is not improved a whit."

"We must not all expect to fill the same sphere in the church, more than in civil organizations," said Edith.

"True enough," said her uncle; "but, the difficulty is, that some will assume a sphere that does not belong to them to fill, and the one that catches the most fire-flies for service is the best fellow."

"I should liken the fire-flies to the public teachers of truth," said Edith, "who give light for all the church about them, and thus, though the most important, perform the most service."

"I want a religion that is a pure equality," said her uncle.

"The best way to reform the religion of others is to reform our own," said Edith, in a mild, sweet voice, which softened all the seeming reproof of her words. "If we do not like the devotions of those about us, let us strive for a better in our closets. I have always found that when I was most disposed to question the religion of other people, I was least in the exercise of grace myself. Perhaps I speak too severely, dear uncle," continued Edith, kneeling at his feet; "but, if so, I am in fault, for the very essence of all true religion is charity, which hopeth all things and endureth all things."

"What a little preacher!" said her uncle, laying his hand upon her head. "For more than twenty-five years I have not listened to a Christian sermon before."

"I do not wish to preach, dear uncle, but I feel so desirous to have you see more clearly the way, and the truth, and the life, I get too earnest, I believe. But you must forgive me, if I am tiresome."

"I have nothing to forgive, Dithy," he said, now more solemnly. "You remind me of my mother, who was a blessed woman. Her latest breath was drawn in prayer for me."

"No prayer of faith is lost," said Edith, reverently. "How beautiful are those words in the vision of John, about the elders who fell down before the Lamb, having harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints!"

As Edith sat there before her uncle, her lovely face animated with intelligence, and with an ardor of purpose such as springs in a heart consecrated to holy services, while he, in all his hardness and eccentricity, was moved unconsciously by the mysterious influence of her words, they were a study for an artist's pencil, and might have been illustrated emblematically by that rock, mentioned by Hephestian, which was of such a wonderful nature it was agitated when struck by the stalk of an asphodel, but could not be removed from its place with a great exertion of force.

Edith was careful never to weary her uncle with words, so she quietly resumed her labors about the room. Her uncle presently took his cane, and hobbled up stairs to his chamber.

But, not long after, he returned, wearing his hat and overcoat, and, after commending her labors, said that he was going out for a short walk.

"If you will not be ashamed to be seen out beside a poor old man like me," he said, "I wish you would go with me, Dithy; for, as I am lame, it is not easy for me to walk without assistance."

Edith readily consented, and, when her uncle had locked the door securely, they went away.

"It seems almost like a new land to me to see such streets, buildings, and people in such costumes," remarked her uncle; "I have spent so many years in other climes, that I cannot make it seem natural."

"How does it compare with that to which you have been accustomed?" inquired Edith.

"Unfavorably, in many respects," said her uncle. "The women whom we meet here look like fragile white lilies, ready to be blown away by the first adverse breath, rather than like gorgeous flowers, which flourish, in the luxuriance of beauty, beneath a tropical sun. I would rather see one of the European or Asiatic beauties than a bevy of these pale Americans."

"I might tell you stories of the favorite ladies of many an Eastern monarch, — of splendors of which you have never even dreamed; but there is yet another side to each of these pictures, so black, so revolting, that you would rather accept the lot of the humblest girl who walks these streets, than all the

splendor and beauty of the East, with its balance of sin, and terror, and death. True is the Chinese proverb, 'When thy bed is straw, thou sleepest in security; but when thou stretchest thyself on roses, beware of the thorns.'"

"It is better, after all, to be content with our portion," said Edith, with a smile, "if we do not walk the streets like birds of paradise. As the Scripture says, 'Seeing there be many things which increase vanity, what is man the better?'"

"What is that large building before us, that stands like a fortress, gloomy and impregnable?" inquired her uncle, as they progressed in their walk.

"That," replied Edith, "is the state-prison."

"I remember now," said her uncle. "Suppose we enter its precincts, and look about a little. I have a fancy for visiting such places; they open an interesting book of human nature, from which I read valuable instruction much more than from palaces and temples. And I know something of the life of a prisoner, from experience."

On being admitted within the plain, gloomy walls, a cold chill crept over the heart of Edith, and she clung more closely to her uncle, as if seeking his protection. They passed out into the spacious yards, with their high, impenetrable barriers from the world, and saw the prisoners at their labors; while the sounds, heavy, grating, and incessant, of the hammers falling upon the stone, seemed like the records of the moments they wore out in expiation of their crimes, written with an iron pen in the rock forever. The heart of Edith trembled with compassion at the spectacle; but her

uncle, whose eye was familiar and ear practised in the world's harsh scenes, looked on, apparently unmoved.

They passed on into some of the work-shops. In one of these, where were many convicts engaged upon some mechanical labor, Edith's eye fell upon a prisoner, who immediately occupied all her attention. At the second glance, his countenance seemed familiar; and it was evident that she was also recognized, for his face had suddenly become overspread with a hue of shame, and he turned away as much as possible, that he might escape unnoticed. With great emotion she asked her uncle to inquire the name of the prisoner she indicated.

"That is Abiel Tyng, late of Boston, but formerly of Waterbury, I believe," replied their conductor.

"It is he!" responded Edith, in a suppressed voice.

"Who, child?" inquired her uncle.

"The man who defrauded my father of all his estate, and afterwards with his family flourished upon his ill-gotten gains. For what crime is he here?" she inquired.

"For robbery."

As they passed the prisoner, Edith caught his stolen glance, and the hot blood of shame mounted to his close-cropped hair. But Edith could feel no exultation now. The tears rushed to her eyes, and she entreated her uncle to leave that unhappy scene as quickly as possible.

"I remember now," said Edith to her uncle, on their way from the prison, "how this Tyng came into the factory at

Waterbury, with two ladies dressed in great elegance, and saw me at my work."

"He did, indeed!" said her uncle.

"Yes; and in reply to some observation made by one of the ladies respecting the factory-girls, he said it would be a great pity if they should get above themselves; for some were born to work, or something very like."

"I wonder what he thinks he is born for now," said her uncle.

"But I cannot feel any other emotion than pity for his wretchedness," said Edith.

"I can, easily," said her uncle.

"Do you think it is right to?" asked Edith, half timidly.

"It is natural, any way," said her uncle.

"But not quite right, I am certain," said Edith.

When they had returned home, Edith asked if she should not go out and procure something nice for dinner.

"No," said her uncle; "I am already well provided, for a poor man. Yesterday I cooked enough to last till to-morrow, with the help of a little heating to-day. You need n't laugh, Dithy," he added, as he saw her mirth at the idea of his housekeeping. "Every traveller in the East learns how to cook the dishes that can tempt an epicure. I only lack material; though, if I had plenty of money, I could not get in these markets what I want."

Edith found that her uncle possessed unusual skill in the culinary art, although his seasoning was too outlandish to be

palatable to her; yet, with some alterations of her own, the dishes proved quite agreeable.

"Now, if I only had some of my favorite eating, it would seem like old times," said the old man, as he sat down to the table.

"Pray, what is it?" asked Edith.

"The best thing I ever ate was the baked foot of an elephant. You must have heard it lauded in the records of gastronomy?"

"O, no, never!" replied Edith, with some repugnance in her expression.

"Then you know nothing about the finest eating. Another excellent dish is the ortolan, a bird which was formerly sold at such enormous prices to the epicures of Rome; and then the mullet, and some other kinds of fish, served up with frontignac."

Before Edith had concluded her dinner, her uncle produced a box of dates, and some other dried fruits he had brought from abroad, which she highly praised, very much to his satisfaction.

After dinner, while her uncle smoked and drank coffee, Edith sat engaged upon her sewing, and talked of her past life, at his request. Then he told stories of his travels, interesting Edith so closely that the afternoon had waned before she was aware. At an early hour she took leave of her uncle and returned home, expecting to meet Mr. Raymond and Mary. But she was disappointed. As the evening train of cars, upon which they were to return, had been due some time,



she concluded that they must have made a short stop somewhere about the city.

Requesting the housekeeper to defer the tea, she took a book and sat down to read, to consume the time. It was the new book in which Mr. Raymond had promised to read aloud that evening after his return; and she smiled to herself as she thought that by her punctuality she had anticipated the pleasure. Her reading soon absorbed all her attention, and an hour had well-nigh passed before she recollected why she was waiting.

At length she began to think it was a little singular that they did not come, as they had engaged to return early, and spend the evening with her. Calling a servant, she inquired if the carriage were sent at the appointed time, and, being told that it had been gone two hours, she began to feel anxiety about their absence.

"If they do not appear within a few minutes," she said, "I will send to inquire. She tried to frame numerous plausible reasons for their failure to return; but, no sooner was her hope fastened upon one, than its futility became apparent, and it gave place to another, to be also rejected, till her anxiety deepened into a nervous foreboding. She had decided to despatch a messenger to the dépôt, when she heard the carriage stop at the door; and, throwing aside her book, she exclaimed: "They have come at last! O, I am greatly relieved!"

Her first impulse was to hasten down and meet them; but,

devising a little scene for their welcome, she remained where she was, impatiently.

Presently, hearing footsteps ascending the stairs, she sprang forward to welcome Mary, and tell her how much she had suffered in apprehension. But she met only a servant, whose face she perceived at once was blanched with affright.

"What has happened? Speak, for the love of Heaven!" she cried, seeing that some terrible intelligence struggled upon his lips.

"A dreadful accident has happened to the cars, ma'am, and —"

"O, they are not injured! Tell me they are safe — only detained!" she exclaimed.

He shook his head. He heard sounds of hurrying steps below, and a new pallor settled over his face. "Mr. Raymond, we hear, is very much hurt, ma'am."

"And Mary?" demanded Edith, frantically.

"Mrs. Raymond has just been brought home."

Edith could not stop to hear more; but, rushing past him, hastened below stairs. She suddenly paused, perceiving there were strangers assembled. Horror was marked upon their countenances, and they were speaking in that low, suppressed voice that betokens the presence of something fearfully unusual.

On entering the room in which they stood, her eyes at once took in a form which was laid upon the sofa, about which the garments were crushed to fragments, and reddened with blood. The face was closely covered.

"Where is Mary — Mrs. Raymond?" cried Edith.

Some one pointed to the form, and whispered, "She is dead!"

"Dead!" gasped Edith. "O, my God! This is too much to bear!" and, with a wail of agony, she fell down helplessly in a swoon.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### REVERSES.

ONE week, with its seven iron or golden days, how much may it bring of woe or gladness ! One week from the day when Edith went to visit her uncle, she was alone, and submerged in grief in that stricken home, with no hope of the return of the companions who were gone. Her misfortunes had proved more heavy than even they had appeared in their first crushing weight. Mr. Raymond had only lingered a few hours, in a state of insensibility, before he was numbered among the dead, with his wife.

Those solemn words, the inspired dirge for the dead, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down ; he fleeth also a shadow, and continueth not," had been read over their remains, and together had they been borne away to the tomb to return no more forever. Edith had passed through all this as one in a dream. The great grief, with its overwhelming excitement, the funeral ceremonies, the words of consolation, the solitude which brooded over her heart like the gloom of night, all held her senses, as it were, paralyzed with sorrow.

The friends and strangers, who had sought to soothe her wounded heart, having left her by herself for a season, the extent of her loss was more certainly defined to her. Her first impressions had been poignant; in the solitude of uninterrupted reflection, her sorrow became deep, abiding, and calm.

Many times, on this day which brought the week to a close, had she wandered through the rooms which so late had been animated with the sunny presence of the beloved; everything, on either hand, as in a cemetery, suggestive of death. The boudoir, which was more closely associated with Mary than any other room, her harp, books, chair, work-basket, remaining just as she had last used them, seemed now to Edith all overcast with a chilling darkness. Oftenest, by some unaccountable influence, had she lingered in the room in which was the portrait of the elder Mr. Raymond, her grandfather. Now the gloomy, austere face, with its deep eyes, she imagined looked down upon her steadily, till it softened into something of benignity and compassion.

"My grandfather — blessed name!" she whispered. "O, that I could have been permitted to love you in life — to call one smile of affection to those stern lips!"

But the very thought shapen into words held her breathless with awe, as she looked upon the face, which again, to her imagination, wore its wonted severity. A storm had been boding in the leaden sky since the morning; and, toward the wane of day, the rain began to fall against the window-panes, and the harsh, cold winds of November went rustling and

sighing heavily without the house, as if instinct with a human wail of woe. Edith could not wander in the great, desolate rooms, now ; for, with the early gloaming, and the rain, there seemed to have come in the dusky robes of the dead, and they brushed past her at every step ; while cold, pale hands were laid upon her brow, in a solemn and silent benediction.

She went to the library, determined to occupy her mind with reading until the hour when the housekeeper should come to receive her instructions for the following day. All remained as Mr. Raymond had last left it. Beside the writing-desk was his favorite volume turned down upon its open page, as if the interrupted reading were to be resumed with the next leisure. Taking it up half unconsciously, she sat down to read. A stronger gust of wind swept by the walls of the house, as if a legion of spirits were cleaving the air with their sable wings. With a trembling heart, she steeled her ear to the sounds, and read on. But, when she came to the words, "Green thorn of the hill of ghosts, that shakest thy head to nightly winds ! Is there no spirit's windy skirt now rustling in thy leaves ? Often are the steps of the dead in the dark-eddyng blasts, when the moon, a dun-shield from the east, is rolled along the sky," she said —

"I cannot read more ! It is too dark without and within my heart."

And, leaving the chair in which she had seen Horace Raymond so often sitting, she went out, and closed the door behind her, pausing, for the first time, to turn the key in the lock. She then went to the room of the housekeeper, who

sat mending, as she always did of a Saturday night, and singing to herself, in a low voice, the hymn beginning with

“Hark ! from the tombs, a doleful sound !”

Edith had ostensibly joined her upon business, but consolation was not less her object. This seemed somewhat doubtful; for the woman straightway began to speak of the gloomy night, and the superstitions connected therewith, till she fell upon tales of horror, enough to chill the very life-blood.

And so, at an early hour, Edith, weary with grief, retired to her pillow. But she could not sink her thoughts into the soft, peaceful lap of forgetfulness. The storm having increased to violence, her mind kept pace with its strong confusion, refusing to be led by the angel of the green pastures and the still waters. Woful, indeed, is the first night of storm after the dead have been borne from our homes. On such a night, when we hear the winds shriek and howl over the roof, adown the chimneys, and into every cranny and casement, till the house groans and trembles like a thing of life in agony, we twine our affections more closely around the living whom we love, and bless God that we are not utterly bereft.

But Edith could not feel this consolation in that desolate home. Hour after hour she lay feverishly wrestling with her thoughts, until toward morning, when the storm abated, she finally slept. But her sleep brought no rest — only troubled and fitful dreams of the dead.

The morning dawned in cold and brilliant calmness. It

was the first Sabbath since the burial of the dead, and, to Edith, a new Sabbath in her existence. At the sound of the church-bells, which struck over the city, her heart failed within her, and she exclaimed, sorrowfully, "I am alone! I am alone!" in harmony with the solemn peals. Then she prayed till she remembered the words "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," and grew calm as the holy morning.

Horace Raymond had been very much beloved, from his youth, by the people with whom he worshipped; and, on this day, they manifested especially their mourning for his death. There were also many to whom Mary had attached herself; for her character had deepened into rare loveliness. To all those who had known them it was a melancholy day; but to Edith especially it was gloomy. The hours moved slowly and heavily. With its close came thoughts of the opening week, and its new cares and business. Edith was sitting by herself, and reflecting upon the heavy responsibilities which had fallen to her lot, as meantime evening stole on, when she was aroused by the entrance of the housekeeper, who announced that a gentleman had called, and wished to see her.

"Did he not send his name?" inquired Edith.

"He said, when I asked him, it was no matter; he must see you, at any rate," replied the housekeeper, smiling.

Edith was not accustomed to company on the Sabbath evening, and she regarded the circumstance as somewhat singular. She thought hurriedly of her few friends, and among them of Hugh Oliver, who, for some unknown reason, had not appeared to offer condolence during the week preceding,



which had not a little contributed to her wakefulness on the past night.

With a perturbed heart, she descended to the receiving room. She saw that her visitor had arisen from his seat, and was examining the articles about the room with the close scrutiny of one employed in taking an inventory. She advanced with some hesitation; for, not being able to see his face, she could not divine who could thus be assuming such freedom.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" she inquired.

No answer being returned, she presented herself fully before him. The face that now looked upon her was that of a stranger—an old man, with bald head, a countenance coarse and harsh, and a stooping, small figure, poorly and slovenly attired. Her next impulse was fear; for she believed that this man was wholly an intruder.

"This the girl that Horace took home?" he inquired, rather as a demand than a question, while he eyed her searchingly.

"I am Edith Hale—a relative of the late Mr. Horace Raymond," she replied.

"Ye came in so soft and cat-like, and I was so busy here, that I did n't hear ye. Edith Hale is yer name, then?"

Edith bowed stiffly.

"I should ha' been here before now, only I did n't know he was killed till last night."

"Are you an acquaintance of Mr. Raymond's?" asked Edith.

"No, I an't, I never wanted to know him; but I am his uncle — old Raymond's only sister's husband."

The old man now looked upon Edith as if he expected some deference; but, failing of eliciting any notice from her other than that of wonder, he continued, in a stronger voice,

"And now I am his heir; his *only heir*, mind ye!"

Edith knew not what answer to make to this, for she thought she was encountering a crazed person. The dark, small eyes of her visitor were fastened upon her with a shrewd, fierce expression, which made her tremble.

"I conclude you are not aware that my father was a half-brother of the late Mr. Raymond, the oldest child of the elder Raymond?" she said, after a painful pause, in which the old man had been closely scrutinizing the expression of her face.

"No, no!" he replied, shaking his head wisely, "I guess I an't aware of any such stuff as that! I don't know nothing about it; nor I shan't know nothing about it!"

"Have you never heard of this before?" inquired Edith.

"I've heard a great many things before, but stories don't take me in. My name is Rufus Sykes, and that man knows what he is about, and nothing can turn him out of any course of his'n."

"You surely do not doubt my word?" said Edith, now beginning to comprehend something of the man's design against her.

"I believe that every word about old Raymond's first marriage is a lie; and you, and all the powers of earth, can't prove that it is n't!" he said, fiercely.

"But the elder Mr. Raymond left a writing, detailing all the circumstances of his marriage to my father's mother," said Edith.

"I knew that before," rejoined the old man, with another shrewd shake of the head.

"And in that writing he expressly ordered that I, my father's only child, on attaining the age of my majority, should receive a certain portion of all his estate. And, now that Horace is dead, I am the only legal heir to the whole of this Raymond property," continued Edith.

"Was that writing signed and witnessed?" asked the old man, in a tone that expressed the luxury of triumph.

Edith hesitated, and turned deathly pale. She now recalled the fact that old Mr. Raymond had not been able to finish this document, and had died without leaving his name upon it. As she had not yet come to the years of her majority, no part of her property had been received.

"I know all about it," said the old man, "so ye need n't trouble yourself to think of anything to say. I heard the whole story when old Horace Raymond died; and I knew then, if young Horace should die without leaving wife or children, or a will, I should get every cent of the Raymond property for my own child. He has died, and he did n't leave a will, nor wife, nor child."

"I know it would be the wish of the Raymonds, were they here now," said Edith, "that I should inherit their estate."

"What if it would? Dead men can't help what becomes of their money, even if it goes to the ones they'd least want

to have it go to. I know there never was any love betwixt the Raymonds and I, but that don't alter the matter a whit now. It's good enough for the old man!" he added, soliloquizing; "he always hated me and my sister. Good enough for him! He promised to have her and then did n't, and it broke her heart. Good! I've got all the money he laid up now!"

The tears came to Edith's eyes; she was utterly at a loss what to say or do, for she had no one to whom to appeal in this emergency.

"I am certain," she said, at length, "that you must be mistaken in this. I believe that I shall be able to dispute your claim."

"Dispute it as much as you like! You may go to any lawyer in this state, and see if you can prove that you are the legal heir to this property, instead of me."

"I shall try it," replied Edith.

"Very well," said the old man, "the sooner the better. It matters nothing to me. This place and this property is mine, and you will have to own it is."

"You cannot," said Edith, "be so determined upon taking advantage of my helplessness! If you persist in this, and it prove as you say, I shall be thrown upon the world in poverty, when, as you know, I am the only heir to this estate."

"You ought ter be thankful," he said, "that you've had so much out of the Raymonds here, when you an't any related to 'em. Now, I warn you to leave this house by to-morrow night, for I am going to sell it at auction, and everything in 't."

"You will not certainly deprive me of a home until the case between us is decided at a court of justice!" exclaimed Edith. "I am an orphan, without brothers or sisters to aid me, and I have a poor, lame uncle, who is looking to me for future support. You cannot find it in your heart to do this great evil! Think, if you have children, how you would feel to know that they were forced to such an extremity!"

"I've heard that Horace took ye out of poverty. It won't be nothing new to you to be down again. You have had too much here now; it's all come right out of me, at last."

Edith sat down, overwhelmed with grief.

"You need n't look so hard at me, girl," he continued. "I know what I'm about; and, if you knew Rufus Sykes, you'd know that he's like an iron bar, he can't be bent. He's been through a great many rocks, but he's sure to break wherever he strikes."

"This business ill becomes the Sabbath. I will see you at another time," said Edith.

"It's no use to talk such stuff to me! I shall come into my own house, here, a Sunday, or any day I take a notion, without asking leave of anybody. I come to-night a purpose to save time, for I don't waste my life away, like the lazy, good-for-nothing gentry. I tell ye, once for all, you must leave this house right away, or be driven out by an officer. After to-morrow, if you are here, I shall charge ye rent. And when ye go, if you take a single article that belonged to the Raymonds away with ye, I shall prosecute ye for it. And now I want a candle, so that I can go round through all

the rooms and see jest what is in 'em. When I once put my eye on a thing, if it an't there next time, I shall know it."

Edith was so overwhelmed at this singular revelation, that she had no power of remonstrance. Until the next morning, when she could make efforts to ascertain the truth of this man's pretensions, by taking legal counsel, her anxiety was intense. Without experience in business of this kind, she felt reluctant to present her case to a stranger. She remembered Hugh Oliver, one of the most distinguished practitioners of law in the city, and an acquaintance who had already manifested great friendliness, to whom she could go; but her heart forbade it. She had not seen him for some time, and she believed that his former friendship had lapsed into indifference, or forgetfulness. As he had not come to her to offer his sympathy after the distressing casualty, of which he could not fail to hear, she would not have the appearance of seeking him.

With a failing heart she entered the building chiefly occupied by the offices of counsellors, and ascended the long flight of stairs. On reaching the passage at the head, she paused a moment, to collect her scattered thoughts to a degree of control. On either side, for a long way before her, she saw the doors with the names of the attorneys upon the ground glass panes, like black symbols upon ice. At this juncture she heard footsteps ascending the stairs, and she moved forward within the shadow of an angle of the passage, for she remained too much perturbed to proceed upon her business. As the steps approached, the voices of two gentlemen in conversation fell

upon her ear, one of which she immediately recognized. Turning her head involuntarily, she encountered Hugh Oliver.

"Is it possible?" he said, pausing suddenly, and with interest. "You were going to see me, were you not?"

"No," said Edith, too much confused to consider what she said, "I came upon legal business, scarcely caring what lawyer I saw."

"You are in great affliction," continued Oliver, looking sadly upon her, as she stood tearfully in her deep mourning garments. Edith could not reply. "I have but late heard of the painful circumstances of your friends' death, having returned to the city this morning, after an absence of several weeks."

At these words a momentary gladness sprang up in her heart, but it was quickly succeeded by the old mistrust.

"Perhaps he thinks me an heiress," she thought; "but he shall be quickly undeceived."

Edith did not refuse now to be shown into Oliver's office, and, after some preliminary conversation, stated to him succinctly her difficulty in hand. Oliver examined her papers, asked many questions, and then gave his opinion that it was a doubtful case.

"But, as there have been decisions in favor of cases scarcely more promising than yours," he added, "I think I should advise you to proceed to litigation with this Sykes. It being a clear case in right, although without substantial evidence in law, there is a hope for you."

"But if I should lose the case," inquired Edith, "I should have to defray the expenses of my suit?"

"Yes," said Oliver, "the cost could not be drawn from the defendant."

"Then," said Edith, "it will be in vain for me to think of litigation; for I am very poor in my own property, and have not a dollar to spend in that way."

"That need not deter you, for I will engage to carry on the suit upon my own expense, if you fail of obtaining favorable judgment," he said, his face flushing slightly, for he felt an embarrassment in offering to confer a favor.

Edith raised her eyes upon him, through tears, and was too much affected to give words to her acknowledgments.

"In the mean time, while the suit is in process," said Oliver, who seemed desirous of changing the current of thought as quickly as possible, "may I inquire what course you propose to pursue in regard to your present residence?"

"I would rather inquire of you what is best for me to do. This man has warned me to leave the house by to-day; has he power to oblige me?"

"No; but, if you lose the case, he can exact of you rent from the time of his notice to you to leave the premises; and, as that would be inconvenient, I should advise you to abandon the house at once. Have you no friends in this vicinity, with whom you can reside at present?"

"I have an uncle, my mother's brother, who is but late returned from a residence of many years abroad," replied Edith.



"That is very fortunate for you," said Oliver, "as it will be necessary for me to see you occasionally about your case."

"My uncle," said Edith, determined that he should derive no false impressions of her circumstances, "has returned in destitution, and is incapacitated for labor by infirmity; therefore I am more anxious to secure my just dues, as I have undertaken to provide for him."

Oliver sat reflectively now, twirling his pen between his fingers.

"Were I a friend of longer standing," he began, at length, "I should feel warranted to interest myself in the means to which you look for this support. You have said that you have but little property in your own right; and, if I can be of any service to you, by a loan, or otherwise —"

He stopped, for, when he raised his eyes to hers, and saw the expression she wore, he added abruptly,

"You are not disposed to trust much in the disinterestedness of my friendship."

"From what do you derive such an opinion?" asked Edith, faintly smiling.

"From repeated observation."

"Have I not convinced you," said Edith, "before this, of my appreciation of the great service you have already rendered me? I certainly intended to."

"I do not refer to that," he said, "but rather to a certain suspicion of the truth of my professions of real interest in your welfare, which you manifest toward me on all occasions, unless thrown off your guard; I am led to think that this

manner is not natural to you, but rather the result of false impressions of some kind, relating to me. If I speak with too much freedom, you must pardon me."

"You are not wholly correct," replied Edith, smiling despite herself.

"At least in the larger part," pursued Oliver.

"I have no less faith in your professions of friendship than in those of any other man of the world," said Edith.

"I respect your caution, for I can easily comprehend how a young girl — an orphan and unprotected — is suspicious of treachery. I only wish you to believe me your sincere friend, both for your own sake, and for the sake of your late friend and protector, whom I long respected and loved."

Edith was too much moved to reply; but Oliver knew that he was not quite misunderstood now. As she arose to leave, he said,

"I will take your future address, Miss Hale, for I may have business which will make it necessary for me to see you before you come in here again."

Edith hesitated, for she preferred that this information should not be known to Oliver. She did not wish him to visit her, and thus win her affections, to throw them lightly away, as another had done; and she had seen enough of the world to believe that a man of his high position would never really seek one without family or fortune for a more serious motive.

"You can address me by letter, simply directed to this city, if you please," she said, at length.

"But I shall wish to see you personally," said Oliver.

"The case will require very close attention, and I shall have business with you which cannot well be communicated by letter."

"In that case," said Edith, "you can make an appointment by writing to me, and I will come here to your office."

Oliver looked somewhat disappointed at this arrangement; but Edith had suddenly assumed too much dignity to warrant a cross-examination.

"I have omitted," added Edith, "to express my gratitude to you for your unexpected kindness to me on this painful occasion, and for your offers of assistance in regard to my future livelihood, which I am not at present in need of accepting; but none the less am I sensible of your generosity."

Oliver arose and followed her to his door, where he detained her a moment, as he spoke a few words of encouragement and consolation, in his own characteristic manner, which had so much impressed Edith from her first interview with him. He was rewarded by such a look of gratitude and sweetness, that he could not resist the impulse to take his hat and accompany her to the street, leaving his office in charge of his partner. When there, it struck him suddenly as unfriendly to leave her to walk alone to her destination, with her sad heart, amid the jostling crowd; and, before a second thought, he had offered to attend her back to her home, refusing to hear her unwillingness to trouble him further.

When, finally, he must part with her, his conversational powers seemed to have suddenly fled; and, pressing her hand rather more than was quite fashionable, he bowed awkwardly,

and walked away in a direction exactly the opposite from what he had intended. And Edith, with an unusual tremor at her heart and flush upon her cheek, was wondering, the remainder of that trying day, in which she went forth from the place of many associations of a pleasant and painful past, why so much sadness had been suddenly lifted from her heart, when sorrow, and care, and privation, all unforeseen, had recently fallen in the path of her life.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### WONDERFUL.

FROM the time of the council affairs did not improve in the parish of Waterbury. The popularity of a minister, always of a precarious nature, seldom regains its former strength when there has been an outbreak of so much magnitude, even if the turbulence subside to apparent tranquillity. With increased solemnity Mr. Loomey delivered a number of discourses from various pointed texts of Scripture, elucidating the fact of the persecutions and indignities endured by the clergy of his time. The uninitiated hearer would have inferred that Mr. Loomey, the very exemplar of all goodness, was likewise the most abused of men.

The evening meetings of the Dorcas Benevolent Society, resumed with the winter season, did not receive his favor at this time. They encouraged frivolity and lightness, he said; and he refused to read the notices of their recurrence from his pulpit on the Sabbath. He would read them at the meeting of the week.

"That," said Father Shaw, on being told of it by Miss Leah, "is certainly straining at a gnat, when I should n't

wonder ef he was swallowin' some sort of a camel, all the time."

"He is a minister," said Miss Leah, "and we must not be severe in our judgment."

"Minister or no minister," said Father Shaw, "I shall speak what I think, as I have these sixty years; and I say the cause of Zion won't prosper so long as such men as this ere Loomey is among those that takes care on't. I don't know nothin' really bad ag'in him; and, mind, I never tell *all* I think on him. We want—the churches all want—ministers who are in their work with all their hearts, and not part way in't, while two thirds on 'em is in the world, the flesh, and the devil."

"They would tell you that they are so poorly off for earthly support," said Miss Leah, "it makes them of necessity more worldly than they would be if they were suitably supplied with the means of a livelihood for themselves and families."

"Well, when they say that, I an't a mind to dispute 'em—at least, a great many ministers. Mr. Loomey, here, has a good salary for a single man, as everybody round knows. But it's true that ministers, for the chiefest part, don't get paid well enough. One reason is, there's too many meetin'-houses of the same sort in no great circuit of miles. Another reason is, people get to thinking that ministers are not fed by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord; which is a mistaken idee. They can't find money in fishes' mouths, as Peter did, and they need things got by money as much as other folks. I've allers been in favor of

givin' a minister a good salary, and then pickin' only the best; such, I mean, as the Scriptur tells, and no other."

"Many churches are not able to give a good salary," said Miss Leah.

"A great many churches are abler than they think for; for it's cheaper in the end to hire a good minister, and then pay him. And then, where there rally is a poor society, 't would be much more doin' God's sarvice for rich people to give to such ere, than to help send so many missionaries off among the heathen. Let one half of the money that's sent in this way out of our country, to the Lord only knows where, be saved at home for our own poor pastors and churches, and we might have a better state of things 'mongst us."

"It is certainly a matter we should consider with serious reflection and prayer," said Miss Leah.

"I stick to 't," said Father Shaw, "that ministers, as a gineral thing, are to be pitied nowadays, as I told Mr. Wellmont once; for, with all their faults, they an't well-off enough to be envied."

"Mr. Wellmont was a good man," said Miss Leah, with a sigh. "We now realize more fully what we lost when he left us."

"Yes; but he warn't matched right. You harness up a good, stiddy horse with an upish colt, and there'll be high times — kicking and runnin', and all sorts of mischief to the load that's behind."

Father Shaw's pity for ministers was brought into requisition sooner than he had foreseen. He was at work in his

shop, one winter afternoon, not long after this conversation, when he was visited by Miss Leah in an appearance somewhat remarkable for one of her usual precise and orderly manner.

"What's the matter, Leah?" asked her father, looking upon her in surprise.

But Miss Leah was too much overcome to speak for some minutes. She sat down on one of the old rush-bottomed chairs of the shop, and, folding her hands stiffly over her very long black-silk apron, actually burst into tears. After all, she looked not much grieved.

Father Shaw stood up, with his hammer in hand, a picture of astonishment, and looking scarcely less formidable than Thor with his hammer Mjolner.

"Why don't you tell what 'tis that's happened?" demanded Father Shaw again.

"It has come, at last!" sobbed Miss Leah, using her handkerchief freely.

"What's come?"

As Miss Leah vouchsafed no explanation, Father Shaw continued,

"Has the cider come to vinegar? or the cream come to butter? or what upon earth is it that's come — the devil himself?"

"My day is come," spoke Miss Leah.

"I don't know any more now about it than ever," said her father, striking his hammer upon a nail, with emphasis.

Miss Leah drew herself up, and even condescended to turn



around and bestow a patronizing glance upon the little looking-glass behind her, which had hung in that same spot for more than thirty years. As she withdrew her eyes somewhat reflectively, she said, in a deep voice, which startled Father Shaw anew :

"Yes ; a very strange circumstance has come about."

"How ye talk! wuss and wuss!" exclaimed Father Shaw, angrily. "Have you turned to be crazy, or a fool?"

"I have had an offer of marriage, father!" now announced Miss Leah.

"Is that all?" rejoined her father, with a most provoking indifference, after intelligence of such rare importance. "I thought, for sartin, some dreadful thing had befallen ye."

"Father! how can you make so light of a matter of such consequence?" said Miss Leah, in her most solemn manner.

"You've made dark on't here long enough, and it's high time I made light of such nonsense."

"Nonsense!" repeated Miss Leah, in a tone of rebuke.

"I don't care what 'tis," said Father Shaw, bestirring things about him, with evident impatience.

"Didn't you know he had been here, father?" Miss Leah's voice was softer now.

"He?—Who? How should I know who *he* is?"

"Father!" said Miss Leah, solemnly and reverently, "it is a minister!"

"Not a minister offered himself to you, Leah?" rejoined Father Shaw, in a voice which betrayed as much interest as even Miss Leah could desire.

"It is even so. I knew that all my past life of sacrifice and strife for the right would not end in nothing. My reward is at the door, knocking now."

"Well," said Father Shaw, sternly, "if it comes in the shape of a minister, I won't let him in. He may knock till he wears his knuckles out, afore I'll open my door. I'd a plaguy sight druther you'd marry a man that's driven nails, and sich like, all his life, like me, than to marry a minister. I've no opinion of 'em for husbands, at all. They're allers poor as church-mice; allers have no continuin' city, and for everlastin'ly in trouble."

"Everybody is called to more or less trouble," said Miss Leah. "The more need have they who endure so many crosses of some one to help them along in life."

"I an't a-goin' to help 'em in that way," said her father. "I shan't let any of my hard arnings go to support one of them are lazy-bones."

"O, father!" said Miss Leah, "but a short time since, you were telling me what a hard time good ministers had, and now —"

She could not go on; but, rising with great stateliness, with her handkerchief to her mouth, walked out of the shop into the house.

"Now, what in plague has all this come for?" said Father Shaw, to himself, as he drove his hammer vigorously. "My Leah get married! at this time of life, too! What would become of me! and, more'n all, what would become of her, ef she should really marry a minister!"

The next question had suggested itself several times before, but he felt too much disturbed to ask it—

“Who is this ere minister, that’s been such a fool as to offer himself to Leah? Ef I’d only kept in a little, I s’pose she’d ha’ told me,” he added.

In the evening, when he went in to his supper, Miss Leah had nearly recovered her habitual appearance, though her face was considerably flushed, which might possibly have resulted from her having prepared the meal over an oak-wood fire; and, when she poured the tea, her hand was not so steady and direct with the straightforward purpose as usual.

Father Shaw did not condescend to allude to what had passed; neither did Miss Leah.

“I guess it’s a-goin’ to storm,” he remarked, as he poured his tea.

“O, no!” said Miss Leah; “I think it will be pleasant to-morrow.”

“Humph!” thought Father Shaw. “Everything is mighty pleasant, all at once; but it an’t pleasant to me.”

“I met Maria Weston, as I was goin’ to the store, to-day, and she looked amazin’ pale and poorly,” he said, after a long pause.

“Poor child! I pity her,” replied Miss Leah, in an unusually softened tone.

“So I’ve said, all along; but you never said so afore.”

“Well,” said Miss Leah, a little nervously, stirring the spoons, as though looking for something, “I still think she

has done very wrong. But it is a hard case, and I hope you will try and exert your influence to have people use her as mercifully as possible, consistent with the dictates of conscience."

Father Shaw looked upon her in surprise. But a short time previous, she had expressed herself in the most decided manner against the erring girl. Miss Leah, as all who had known her long and well could testify, was not unkind at heart, but she was often betrayed into very strong righteous indignation.

But now all things to Miss Leah appeared anew, in the reflection of that soft, auroral light, which, at this late hour, had fallen upon her soul. The harshness and angular points of her nature were being smoothed away by a magical influence; for

"Such is the power of that sweet passion,  
That it all sordid baseness doth expel."

Love made her generous, tender, and forgiving — even to a poor, fallen girl, who, but late, had won her mercy only from strict conscientiousness.

On the next day, which proved to be bland and pleasant, as Miss Leah had foreseen, Father Shaw was summoned into the sitting-room, to meet a visitor — *the* reverend visitor, who had made an appointment with Miss Leah to come. It was a comfortable room, although wearing strong characteristics of the minds who presided there. In the large fireplace (for Father Shaw was a decided enemy to all stoves) burned sev-

eral hickory logs, on one side of which dozed a handsome cat, of ancient respectability in the family. Through the windows opening to the south streamed the winter sun across a few trim-looking house-plants, down to the plain carpet, of home manufacture. The rocking-chairs on either side of the fireplace were large, old-fashioned, and cumbrous, composed of wood enough to fashion half a dozen slender chairs of the modern pattern. In one of these chairs sat Father Shaw. In the opposite one, Mr. Lund, the minister, who once said,

“I have left six parishes already, because I preached the truth ; and I am ready to leave six more, if need be.”

“I don’t see what upon arth is the reason that you ministers — most on ye, at least — are allers in such a peck of trouble,” said Father Shaw, when he had listened rather ungraciously to his visitor, for a half-hour.

“I have had a very hard time in life,” said Mr. Lund ; “it seems to me never a man had a harder about here. I commenced life strong in faith, and believing I was called to do a great work in the world. I thought, as I looked about me, and saw so much sin and error in the world, I could be an instrument in accomplishing a great change where I labored. But I have been persecuted, deceived, and disappointed. And last year, when my wife died, and left me and my seven children, I felt that the sum of my calamities was footed. The very money which you and Major Oliver gave me, at the time of the council here, I took to defray my wife’s funeral expenses.”

"What did you put it to that use for?" inquired Father Shaw.

"I had no other money; my society refused to pay me, and I was about leaving."

"Why did n't you stay?" said Father Shaw.

"I was n't liked generally, for the reason that I spoke the truth as my conscience dictated."

"Well," said Father Shaw, "I've allers spoke out what I thought was truth, and I an't any worse off now than I ever was. You should have set out on your own hook in life, as I did, and preached to people whenever ye felt like it, as I have."

"I have lived to see half a century," continued Mr. Lund; "and, on looking back on all the calamities I've gone through, I sometimes think it had been better for me if I had never been born."

"Like enough," said Father Shaw; "and it sartainly would have been better for you ef you had n't been a minister, for such ere men as you and I should n't begin to git a livin' by bein' dependent on other folks. We an't gut smooth, oily tongues enough. I s'pose, ef I had set out to be a minister, I should have put people out so much, wherever I went, I should have been flat on the ground by this time."

Mr. Lund sat silently now, with his long fingers in his silvered hair, and his chin resting upon his palm. As he looked on the bright coals he sighed, and the tears stole out till they trickled down over his white cravat.

"Well," said Father Shaw, at last, after pinching the top of his nose between his thumb and forefinger vigorously, "I don't see what ye 're drivin' at."

Mr. Lund now dropped his hand, and, in a voice somewhat constrained, said, "I came to ask your consent to marry Miss Leah."

"Pshaw!"

"Yes," said Mr. Lund, misconceiving the ejaculation, "Miss Shaw, I mean. I conversed with her upon the subject yesterday, several hours, and she seemed not unfavorable to my proposals."

"What are yer proposals? Where in creation have ye gut a place to take a wife to?" inquired Father Shaw.

"It don't agree with me to preach," said Mr. Lund, "and I have thought it would be much better for me to work on a farm."

"What do you know about farmin'? and where are you goin' to farm?"

"I know all about it, for I was brought up on a farm. I thought, as you couldn't well spare Miss Leah, and as you have some land here you mostly let every year, perhaps we might make some arrangement —"

Mr. Lund faltered, for he felt that he was venturing upon slippery ground. The examination of his qualifications for a minister did not disturb his equanimity so much as this interview.

"The seven children!" said Father Shaw, after looking hard into the fire for some time.

"My oldest is married, and my two next are going to be; my fourth child is away as a teacher, almost the year round; the youngest is with an aunt who has adopted her for her own; and my son John I thought I should want on the farm, while my Jane might help Miss Leah. They are handy, good children, and never make trouble."

"It seems you've gut it all cut and dried," said Father Shaw.

"I hope you will make no objections to this, as your daughter seems interested in my behalf; and we all know that her judgment is second to no woman's in the land."

"Umph! woman's judgment an't good for much when an offer to marry is consarned. Leah allers thought a deal of ministers, while I never did."

"But I propose to be a farmer, for the most part," said Mr. Lund.

"Ef you was an out-and-out minister, I would not hear a word to 't."

"But, now, you will give your consent?" continued Mr. Lund, anxiously.

"How do you think two such folks as you and I are goin' to live under the same ruff?"

"We have always lived under the same heaven; and expect, at last, to live in the same home."

"It seems to me it's an amazin' foolish thing for you to think of marryin' agin. I did n't, arter my wife died."

"But you had Miss Leah to take care of you; and that is all I ask now."



"You're too old to work on a farm, when you an't been used to workin'."

"I am not so much older than Miss Leah as to make a disparity of years between us. Let us see; your son in Boston is the youngest. How old is your daughter, now?"

"She's of age — ask her," said Father Shaw, with one of his curious looks.

"I think I'll go and talk with Miss Leah about these things," said Mr. Lund, looking very much encouraged. "I conclude I may tell her that you will not withhold your consent?"

"Tell her what you're a mind to," said Father Shaw; "you're both on ye plaguy fools!"

After Mr. Lund went out, Father Shaw sat a long time looking into the fire. At last, he said to himself, as he heard the sound of cheerful voices in the next room, "He tells such a grievous story, I s'pose I shall have to take pity on him. He's allers had a good character, and, ef he's been unforternate, he an't to be despised 'cause he's a minister. I'm gittin' old, and bime-by I shan't want to have so much care of my things; and, ef he's a mind to do what's right, I don't know, on the whole, but it will be a purty good thing for me. Then, when I come to die, Leah would be better off here with somebody to take care on her. One thing I'm sure on; she'll find her match in this ere man; she can't make him train as she does other folks, and I'm glad on 't. And he'll find, too, I guess, that she's a leetle different from women in general. One has got jest about as much care in

'em as t'other. So I guess, on the whole, I'll make up my mind to make the best on't; though it's provokin' to think that a body that's ever been in a pulpit should git a grip on one half of my property, at last, arter all I've said about the ministers."

A few days after these events, Miss Leah visited Maria Weston for the first time since her disgrace. She did not come with reproof, as the trembling girl had concluded, on being summoned to meet her; but she spoke such friendly words, that Maria felt more truly repentant than ever before. She had once been a pupil in a Sabbath-school class taught by Miss Leah, and that time of her innocence and happiness was distinctly recalled before her memory. Miss Leah said little; but that little fell upon Maria's heart with a touching power, for kind words were especially dear to her now that she so seldom was noticed by others.

Had she been addressed harshly and reproachfully, she could have steeled her heart and brooded over her wrongs in a rebellious silence. Now, she was overcome entirely. Unknown to Maria, Miss Leah left a sum of money with Mrs. Linn to defray her expenses for some time, in case her own resources failed. That night, Maria sat beside her babe, and cried all the long, cold hours, as she had done many a night before. She could not lay her head upon her pillow, for it seemed lined with thorns, which pierced even to her burning brain. So long and painfully had she dwelt upon her disgrace and her sin, all things around her now

seemed as a reproach ; and more than all the forbearing kindness of those whom she respected and feared.

Sometimes her fearful reflections were interrupted by the quick sobs of her infant boy as he slept, disturbed by some dream, while the tears escaped from between the soft, light lashes, and moistened the little face. Then she would strain him to her bosom, and murmur low, soothing words.

"Maria will take care of little Iddy," she would murmur softly, while she clasped the tiny hands within her own.

The child had never been named, for Maria anxiously waited for the time when, far away from present scenes, it should bear the name of its father, as had been often promised to her. But she called the babe oftenest "Iddy," from an association with the outcast Ishmael, which had thus been shortened to a familiar word. Maria loved her child as she had never loved earthly thing before, notwithstanding the sorrow and shame. Every silken hair of its head was most precious in her eyes ; and for its weal she would willingly have sacrificed her very life-blood.

Chancing to glance on the wall of the room before her, her attention was at once arrested. Although the lamp burned low, and so flickeringly as to cast a pale, spectral light over the chamber, she saw distinctly the shadow of her infant's head, and above it a larger shadow, as of some uncertain object hovering there unsteadily. She started and looked wildly around upon her child, but nothing unusual appeared. Still she saw

the large shadow moved upon the wall, sometimes up the ceiling till it stood directly over her own head, then swiftly darted back again upon the shadow of the little sleeper, as if it pressed heavily over it till it was blotted out. A recollection of a tale in an old book she had read in her childhood, about vampires extracting the blood of little children, unseen by human eye, rushed over her mind with a chilling power.

She sprang up, and was about to snatch the child in her arms, when she heard a low knock upon the window, just behind her bed. She stood still in affright a moment; but a second knock, with the sound of a suppressed voice, caused her to go to the window without further demur. Putting aside the curtain, she saw a figure standing upon the roof of the shed, which joined the house in that spot, while a lantern, partially shaded by one hand, was held before.

"Open this window a minute; I have something to tell you," said a low voice.

Maria durst not disobey that voice; so, throwing a shawl over her child, she raised the window a little way, while her heart was beating almost audibly.

"I was scared near to death when I first saw your shadow," she whispered.

"I did n't dare wait till morning," said the voice, "for fear somebody would know it; and I happened to think of this window."

"O, dear! I have n't slept a wink to-night, I've felt so wretchedly. I wish I was dead!"

"I dare say; for I saw Leah Shaw go away from here

yesterday, and I could n't wait till I had seen and warned you once more. Did she ask you questions?"

"No; she was very kind, and offered to do anything for me she could."

"Yes, yes; and next she will want you to make a clean breast of the whole affair to her. But now I tell you again to be on your guard."

"Have you made up your mind when to go away from here with me and our poor child?" asked Maria, trembling violently, for it was certain she stood very much in awe of that muffled figure there.

"No; and don't you keep continually asking me about it. I know my own business best, and it won't do for you to attempt, even think, to dictate me," said the whispering voice, coming in almost hissing, like the noise of a snake.

Maria began to sob heavily.

"Hush! they'll hear you. Attend to me, and not so much to yourself. If they want you to go to any of their houses, don't you go. You'll only be come over with their salve, and make a fool of yourself. And, if you once speak the first word that will make them think it is me, remember you are ruined forever. I shall never see you again, and I shall deny everything, and of course nobody will believe you. You have not a friend that will stand by you. So, you see, you had better submit to what I say as quietly as possible. When I get ready to take you away, I shall go, and not before."

"I don't see how I can get along in this way much longer," said Maria. "The money you gave me before I was sick is

all gone but the last dollar; that I have saved day after day, afraid to use it; and these good people here can't afford to do anything for me without pay."

"You can go to work again in the factory, by this time."

"How can I?" said Maria, very sadly. "There would be nobody to take care of the baby, if I was gone. Mrs. Linn has as much as she can do to get along with her work and take care of her husband, with what help I can get time to give her."

"Hang the baby!" said the voice, impatiently.

Maria started as though the angry exclamation had been intended in its full significance.

"O, dear!" she moaned; "it's a poor little thing, and ought n't to suffer for the sins of its parents, I'm sure. I try to take just as good care of it as I can, with Mrs. Linn telling me how; but sometimes I am afraid it will freeze to death, for I did n't dare spend my last money to buy any more wood, as I'm saving it to help go towards my board. If I could get anything to do here, I would work day and night; but people don't have much work to put out in this place; and, when they do, they think I can't do it well, with my baby."

"The child will have to be put in an asylum; then you can go to work again."

"In an asylum!" repeated Maria. "You always said you would take us both away from here, and then we should all have a home together!"

Here she began to cry again bitterly.

"Hush!" said the voice. "I meant it would be a good thing to send it away till I got ready to leave here with you."

"I never, never can have my poor little Iddy torn away from me to be put out where he will have nobody to love him! We 'll both die first!"

"I suppose you will threaten, just to get me to support you here without work."

"I 'll do anything I can — God knows I will! — but, if I can't get work to do, it seems hard to leave me and your child to suffer."

Maria spoke this with hesitation, for she durst not dwell with emphasis upon her wrongs.

"I 've got a few dollars by me now," said the other, "and I will let you have them if you 'll promise to be saving, for you won't get any more money from me for a long time. I have other uses for it. Don't you burn more wood than you can possibly help. It is coming spring, when you can do without altogether; and you must avoid buying milk, or any such thing. You can drink water, and so can the child, with such other stuff as Mrs. Linn gets up. But remember carefully what I have said about their coming here and questioning you. Once let a word out, and you are done!"

"I 'll try and do the best I can," sobbed Maria; "but it would be such a great comfort to me, when I am here so unhappy, to have you tell some time when you think we may be married."

"I have told you I did n't know when," said the voice, angrily. "Shut down your window now."

Maria hesitated, for she would fain have obtained the least consolation in her misery. Was no word of pity, of encouragement, to fall upon her ear, she thought, after all her suffering!

A few pale streaks of the dawn were visible along the eastern horizon, and, as the figure turned away to climb down the roof, a cock in a neighboring barn crew loudly. Once, twice, thrice, it crowed, and the figure had stolen out of the yard without pausing to even look back toward the poor, trembling girl again.

Maria closed the window, with a heavy groan, and found herself in darkness and gloom; for a draught of air had extinguished her feebly-burning lamp. Utterly exhausted, she threw herself upon the bed beside her child, and soon fell into an unquiet slumber.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MR. WELLMONT.

MR. WELLMONT continued to increase his popularity in his new sphere of labor; for he had become a man who united the persuasive power of an orator to the wisdom of a tactician and the genial friendliness of a Christian. But he was called to many trials resulting from the opposing tastes of his wife. Wherever she appeared among his people, he expected she would pull down what he was laboring to build up, and otherwise neutralize his influence. He secretly trembled whenever she opened her lips, as was shown by his asides, —“ Don't, my dear,” “ Be careful, Bertrade, or you will wound their feelings,” “ Pray, recollect yourself, and not be so imprudent,” &c.

Woe to the peace of that husband or wife who must endure the perpetual misery of a life with a companion whose unguarded words and acts compel such involuntary cautions on all occasions!

But Mrs. Wellmont was not the occasion of all the inquietude experienced by her husband at this time. He had been disappointed in his new people. He missed the sterling truth and plain common sense of Father Shaw, the high intellect-

ual cultivation of Dr. and Mrs. Humphrey, the old-school hospitality and courtesy of Major Oliver, and the general intelligence of many members of Waterbury church. He had thought these characteristics too common to demand consideration; but, when he found that not a man of his new society was thoroughly conversant with any kind of literature, and that there was not generally a sensible appreciation of his best discourses, he began to correct some of his long-established impressions. They were almost entirely men deeply engrossed in business, and came into the solemn feasts with brains busied with the thousand details of money-making, so that they had no preparation for the reception of the sublime philosophy or the poetry of the Scriptures. They wanted only sound and searching practical truth, from which warnings might be derived by every man for his neighbor; and that a large and flourishing church might be built up as speedily as they could build a block of buildings, or sell one hundred thousand dollars' worth of goods. Some of Mr. Wellmont's most elaborately prepared sermons met with no response from a major portion of this people, who aroused from their naps at the delivery of a period in a higher voice, and thought it was all very fine. But, when he more directly appealed to the feelings of his hearers, without so much pausing to establish a laborious and logical conviction of the truth in hand, he gained signal attention.

Mr. Wellmont was surprised to find that the solidity of mind manifested by those who led in the social religious exercises was generally inferior to that exhibited in the meetings

to which he had been accustomed. They delivered their remarks in a polite, unobjectionable style of language, just as they addressed their customers at their places of business; but never was there heard anything which indicated acquaintance with the best authors of religious or other literature. Indeed, this was the utmost that could be expected from men who struggled unflinchingly, day and night, to make a fortune, pausing only to read the daily papers, or the organ of their denomination, occasionally a political speech, and, perhaps, a missionary magazine one Sunday evening out of four, or a few pages of some religious book.

But all this was more than compensated in Mrs. Wellmont's estimation. Her elegant furniture and wardrobe were now not "wasted on the desert air." Neither were her aristocratic tendencies. She could find a plenty of ladies who could talk and act to her heart's content. Time, however, made Mr. Wellmont acquainted with another and worthier class among his people—those who preferred plainness and sobriety of living. These were the pillars of his church, on whom he leaned for counsel and real friendship, and without whom he would have found his situation far from enviable.

That this people, as a whole, was a fair sample of all city parishes, Mr. Wellmont learned by observation was not the case; but, being so newly gathered from various sources, it could not be expected to harmonize at once. But Mr. Wellmont had already accomplished much good among them, in gradually weakening the distinctions among the people, under the influence of fervent piety; for nothing so much estab-

lishes a democracy in a church as the operation of vital religion. In such a state, the mere conventionalities of life dwindle into insignificance.

As Mr. Wellmont reviewed his labors, he was grateful for the success that had crowned his efforts, notwithstanding all discouragements ; but he could not close his eyes to the truth that his untiring labors had greatly reduced his health.

It was with something of his old emotions of pleasure that he received, about this time, a letter from Waterbury, bringing with it a delightful reminder of spring in the country, and of the pure, wholesome kindness of a social atmosphere. It was from Miss Leah, who desired him to come to her father's, and unite her in marriage to the Rev. Mr. Lund. She had also invited Mr. Loomey to be present ; but she declared her wish that the ceremony should be performed by himself.

"I will go," said Mr. Wellmont, and he felt happier than for a long time before. He invited his wife to accompany him, though without the least expectation of her compliance. With a satirical laugh, she replied that she had no idea of attending such an affair as the wedding of a Waterbury old maid.

"Besides," she added, with a later reflection, "on the evening you propose to leave, Mr. Phanuel receives company to meet his future bride. I would not fail of being there ; and certainly I should think that you would like to go, just to see that I say nothing unbecoming your wife."

"I have no desire to go to Mr. Phanuel's, now," replied Mr. Wellmont.

"I presume not, as you are so unused to his elegant style. The splendor of his new mansion bewilders you, and you turn with a sigh to the memory of 'the cot beneath the hill,' in which you first saw the light," rejoined Mrs. Wellmont.

"No, not so much does his splendid home sadden me, as the memory of the past connected with his family," said Mr. Wellmont, apparently undisturbed by his wife's sarcasm. "I never enter the presence of that man, but what I recall the picture of a heart-broken wife, forcibly carried away to a mad-house; of little, beautiful Bessie dying of grief for the separation; of my entering the mad-house, a few weeks later, to see the corpse of the mother — the most awful and utterly despairing face of death on which I ever gazed; the hands locked so closely, with the nails torn into the flesh, no human force could wrench them apart; the long, dark hair, which I remember was once so beautiful and abundant, nearly all pulled out of the head, hair by hair; and her last words, 'Take me home to my children!' seemingly chiselled upon the fallen, rigid lips —"

"Pray, cease, if you have pity for me!" interrupted Mrs. Wellmont. "You are so cruel, if you like!"

"If the relation of these things seem cruel to you, Bertrade, how, think you, the hard, actual experience of all this, and much more never known to the world, fell upon the sensitive heart of the victim?"

"But Mr. Phanuel has always been very gentlemanly and kind to us," continued Mrs. Wellmont, somewhat subdued by her husband's words.

"True; I am aware of his great liberality, and for which I hope I am not ungrateful. Therefore it is I do not turn my face utterly away from such a man, as I should feel tempted to do, were it otherwise. I feel, too, a deep interest in the future welfare of his children, so early deprived of the good influences of a mother, and taught to desecrate her memory."

"They will have now another mother, much more accomplished than their own, and learn to forget the first."

"That woman," said Mr. Wellmont, "is perfectly heartless. I saw it the first time I met her as a visitor at Mr. Phaniel's, in Waterbury. In all points of real excellence she is inferior to his late wife, and cares no more for those children than for their father."

"I hear she seems very much attached to Mr. Phaniel," said Mrs. Wellmont, in a low voice.

"I know it is not so, although such may be the appearance; for she is a woman of cultivated intellectual tastes, and likes men of brilliant talent. But Mr. Phaniel's money is too great a temptation for her to resist. She will marry him because a better chance of disposing of herself does not occur."

"You may go your way, and I will go mine," concluded Mrs. Wellmont. "I dare say you will be happier at old Father Shaw's than you would be with me at Mr. Phaniel's."

As Mr. Wellmont seldom found leisure for absence, he concluded to return by way of his mother's home. He had not seen his mother for some time, and he yearned to hear her

voice once more. In her last letters to him she had betrayed despondency, and he feared that her affairs had become much embarrassed. Never had he found himself able to repay all the loans received from her; for the sums he had occasionally saved for this purpose he had been ultimately obliged to expend in housekeeping, which his wife had rendered monthly more expensive. A small amount of money, which now remained to him, he rejoiced in being able to take with him for her. He could not find words to tell his wife of his intention to visit his mother, for he felt in no mood to endure the sarcastic comments she would be likely to offer. Little had he once dreamed that a day like this would come, when he could not speak his mother's name, sacred to him by all love and reverence, without being wounded. Once, since his residence in the city, his mother had made him a short visit; and he had been so much pained by her reception from his wife, he could never ask to have the visit repeated.

"I hope, Bertrade, you will get along happily in my absence," said Mr. Wellmont, when he was about to leave, not knowing well what to say, yet wishing to have the parting friendly.

"Of course I shall," replied Mrs. Wellmont, without lifting her eyes from her embroidery. Still he lingered with his hand upon the door, waiting for a single kind word to carry with him.

"Is there anything from the country you would like to have me bring you?" he continued, in a gayer tone.

"Nothing ; unless it be some of the verdancy of the people about there."

Mr. Wellmont dropped his head, and his shoulders bent slightly, as though they were anticipating another fall of an invisible lash. He had first thought his wife in her severe jesting mood ; now he felt that she had spoken the grave truth.

"I hope you will ever bear in mind, Bertrade," he said, very sadly, "it is a cause of abiding regret to me that I have been the means of bringing you into so much unhappiness. If you should outlive me, I hope you will be happy enough to make up for all the sacrifice —"

"Don't be so croaking!" interrupted Mrs. Wellmont ; "you will certainly miss the cars, if you wait here."

He looked upon her once more through his tears ; but, receiving no encouragement for his meditated parting kiss, went out with a sorrowful "good-by," broken in two by the shutting of the door.

Mr. Wellmont had nearly reached Waterbury, when he unexpectedly encountered an old friend. The first words he heard were,

"My dear reverend sir ! This is too much pleasure ! I am overjoyed to see you ! In the language of the poet,

'I could weep,

And I could laugh ; I am light and heavy — welcome —

A curse begin at the very root of his heart,

That is not glad to see thee !' "

He turned in surprise, and saw before him Mr. Solomon Acre, not pale and haggard, as might have been predicated



from his last interview, but round and ruddy, and as full of poetry and heartiness as ever in his life.

"This meeting is certainly not less a pleasure to me," said Mr. Wellmont; "and the more so that I find you in such excellent appearance. How does this happen?"

"Thank yourself, sir! That good advice of yours acted like a charm, — a 'sovereign balm,' I would say. My eyes were opened with the eye-salve of reason; since which time, I have seen all things in a new light. Everything which once was bottom upward looks now in *propria persona*. And I have been prospered by your primal instrumentality."

"I heard, some time after your departure," said Mr. Wellmont, "of your finding a favorable location. Did you continue there?"

"Yes; I settled my uncle with me, and in time he got quite comfortable, what with good care, and painting virgins upon a plenty of white linen aprons, and working in a garden of mine. He's now another man."

"And you have the happiness of thinking you have done him this good," said Mr. Wellmont.

"I've done myself good, too; for I reckon I am doing a right smart business out there. Own acres and acres of western land; been speculating in townships, and not in house-lots only, as they do in these parts. Don't wish to boast; for, as the poet says:

'Who knows himself a braggart,  
Let him fear this, for it will come to pass,  
That every braggart shall be found an ass.'

But, then, you know it is comfortable, after past misfortune, to find one's self in a mending condition."

"Have you been to Waterbury?" inquired Mr. Wellmont.

"Yes; and I visited Lucinda — *Claudine*, I should have said."

Mr. Wellmont looked inquiringly, to encourage him to proceed.

"She an't married, and, what's better, an't likely to be, as I can discover."

"You have hope yet, then?"

"No, I thank you! The western girls are a heap smarter and finer every way than these delicate Yankee ladies; they an't afraid of anything — work, spiders, or catamounts."

Mr. Wellmont said nothing, but smiled a little.

"Mr. Pickering, they say, is running against the breakers in his business, and would have given up long ago had it not been for his son-in-law; but, now he's dead, he will have to wind up soon. His family are so extravagant, that he earns money to put into a 'bag with holes.' Good heavens, Mr. Wellmont!" now suddenly exclaimed Mr. Solomon, interrupting himself, "you look out of health. I was so glad to see you, and, being a little near-sighted, I did n't notice how pale and thin you are. What is the matter with you?"

"I am a little out of health at present, but not so much so as I was a few months since," replied Mr. Wellmont.

"You must give up labor for a while," said Mr. Solomon, without withdrawing his anxious gaze. "Won't your people send you abroad?"

Mr. Wellmont shook his head.

"I am not able to undertake so long a journey, in health or means," he replied.

"I'll plan for you," continued Mr. Solomon, reflectively; "go home with me to the west. The change of scene and air would mend you wonderfully. Ask leave of absence, and I will bear all your expenses."

"Your kindness merits my heartfelt gratitude," said Mr. Wellmont, much affected.

"Say nothing of that.

'O, call not to my mind what you have done !

It sets a debt of that account before me,

Which shows me poor and bankrupt even in hopes !'"

"I should be glad of a change, certainly, and I will think of your proposition," said Mr. Wellmont. "You will stop here with me?" he added, as he saw that they had now reached Waterbury.

"I have to go further. Where shall I meet you again?" replied Mr. Solomon.

Arranging a place of meeting within the following week, they separated, while Mr. Solomon exclaimed after Mr. Wellmont, as the cars moved on, "God bless you, and give you a good Sunday to-morrow!"

He was answered by a bow and a smile, which he did not soon forget.

As Mr. Wellmont arrived once more at the home of Father Shaw, he recalled his impressions the first time he had

come there, in comparison to what he now experienced, and deduced the common-sense conclusion that it is not wise to judge of the true worth of people by first appearances.

Father Shaw met Mr. Wellmont as he would a beloved son. He even wept over him when he saw how changed was his personal appearance under the inroads of disease. Miss Leah was a little nervous and anxious, but else very much as she used to be. Something very nearly akin to pride she discovered when she presented a daughter of Mr. Lund to Mr. Wellmont. A matronly dignity and affection had already come over her, and it was evident that she thought these children the prettiest she had ever seen.

"I'd no idee," said Father Shaw, "that my Leah would ever be married. It fell on me dreadful amazin'; for I did n't think such an old maid could ever git a body to have her."

"I should have thought your consent would have been the most difficult to get in this case, as Mr. Lund is a minister, Father Shaw," said Mr. Wellmont, with a significant smile.

"I know he is," said the old man, pinching the top of his nose, "but what is to be *must* be, you know; and, ef it's ordered that I must have one of them are in my family, I'll try and make the best on 't; but I'll tell you what, it's plaguy hard work to."

"Ah, well!" said Mr. Wellmont, "I have no doubt but this union will prove a blessing to all concerned."

At the ceremony there were none present but family friends. Mr. Loomey had left home, to remain over the Sabbath in the

next parish. Nothing unusual occurred, save the silence of Father Shaw. For the first time in his life, on any such occasion, he had no words.

The following day was one of the beautiful Sabbaths of spring. Mr. Wellmont beheld the morning light with unspeakable peace, for he had been dreaming of his mother, and his heart was yet glowing with the memory of the meeting. He had beheld her in the vision of sleep, as with the gladness of his youth, and heard her words, "My son, you have come home to me, at last!" and then she had changed into the likeness of the sainted mother of Edith Hale. He had reached forth his hand to hers, when he awoke, and with difficulty persuaded himself it was all a dream.

"In a short time," he reflected, "I shall have met my blessed mother, and the hours will seem long until then."

Upon the hills, in the background of the village, the cattle were grazing quietly. The birds never sung so sweetly. And the sound of flowing waters in the distance seemed like the tide of life ebbing far out into eternity.

When the church-bells rang to call the people to worship, Mr. Wellmont aroused from his revery, and went forth to the familiar altar of his ministrations. With less firmness than formerly he ascended the pulpit steps; and, as he occupied once more his old place, he bowed his head and prayed, less by language than by the yearning aspirations of his spirit.

In hearing of the voice that so often had impressed their hearts, the house was solemnly hushed and attentive, and the eyes of many closed through tears. After the other prelim-

inary exercises, Mr. Wellmont announced his text, which was :  
" And he was transfigured before them : and his face did shine  
as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. \* \* \*  
Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for  
us to be here."

" *Lord, it is good for us to be here !* " repeated Mr. Wellmont, with impressive solemnity. He was so much affected, he paused a moment to recover himself. He had returned to his old friends, not to claim their admiration for the progress he had made, but with a heart full of love, and their familiar faces moved his soul. Fervently did he desire to be instrumental in pointing their thoughts heavenward. As he proceeded to address them, the burden of his soul increased, although he strove to suppress his emotion. Every word he uttered came from his heart with plainness and familiarity, yet with a seriousness no listener could resist.

While unfolding the magnitude and beauty of his theme, heaven seemed to disclose its exceeding glories to his spiritual vision ; such glories as are only pictured in the sublime visions of the Apocalypse, and in the strains of the divine poet of the fall of man, and which were almost communicated by him to the senses of the absorbed and weeping listeners.

Well-nigh could they hear

" heaven opening wide

Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound !

On golden hinges moving."

Suddenly he ceased. A deathly pallor spread over his face like a white cloud !

"My friends!" he faintly uttered, "I can say no more!"

He sat down, and fell back heavily, with closed eyes. Consternation succeeded; it was thought he had fainted. Dr. Humphrey and some others hastened to him anxiously. They spoke to him, but no sound or motion was returned. He was dead.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### PLEASURE AND PAIN.

WHEN Edith recounted the state of her affairs to her uncle, he manifested less interest than she had supposed ; and, when she spoke of the possibility of being compelled to resign the home which was rightfully her own, and was so strongly endeared to her by many associations with her deceased friends, he replied, that he should not so much regret the loss on his own account, for he had seen enough of the world to be thoroughly convinced that superior fortune turned people's hearts, even against their best friends.

"If all this estate should come to you, Dithy," he added, "you would soon give the cold shoulder to your poor old uncle ; and I should be left friendless, alone in this land which is now a strange one to me. I have no home, no friends who own me, but you ; and if—"

He could not proceed, but turned aside to hide his emotion.

"Dear uncle," said Edith, "I wish I could persuade you to be less distrustful of me. One of my strongest reasons for wishing to get possession of this property is that I may be



enabled to provide you a more comfortable home, where you will feel secure from want, and will not have to labor in your advanced years; therefore I am more grateful to Mr. Oliver for undertaking my case so generously."

"Don't trust too much to his generosity," said her uncle; "men are rarely so magnanimous as this lawyer appears to be without a secret prospect of reward. I dare say he sees further towards the bottom of the case than he tells for, and so plans to enlist your gratitude in season to secure the prize at last."

Edith was silent; her uncle's suspicion corresponded so nearly with her own, that she could not attempt to vindicate Oliver's motives.

"Let it result as it will," she said, after a painful reflection, "I am certain that nothing can influence me to forget the duty and affection which I owe you."

"We 'll see," returned her uncle, incredulously. "I 've known more of the world than you have."

"The sorest disappointment that I feel," said Edith, "is, that I cannot, at present, render you the aid I had hoped."

Her uncle told her that she need not feel anxiety for him at present, as he had secured a situation in a large mercantile house in the city; and his salary, though small, would be sufficient to provide for his simple wants. He also counselled Edith to expend the little money she had laid by after the death of her parents in the conclusion of her proposed term of attending school, that, in case of her future poverty, she might be thoroughly qualified to earn a livelihood by teaching.

To this Edith assented, and immediately took up her residence at the institution in which she was a pupil; while her uncle abandoned the cottage for humble lodgings near his business, on account of his lameness, as he informed her, which prevented him from walking any great distance without inconvenience.

On every Saturday afternoon Edith went to see her uncle, to interest herself in his welfare; but she could not persuade him to return any of her visits. Such an appearance as his, he said, would affect her standing among her fine friends; and the greatest favor he could render her was to keep entirely out of sight of those with whom she associated.

"Were I rich, and in sables, and velvets, and diamonds, it would be worth the while for you to show me off," he added, in reply to her renewed invitations; "but, as it is, Dithy, you are a good girl to take so much pains for me, already."

Shortly after the opening of the summer term, the matron of the family having been taken ill and removed, another lady came to supply the situation. With school-girls a trifling event is often magnified into an affair of importance, to be discussed until a new one succeeds. In this case the appearance of the new matron, who presided at one of the tables, was such as to elicit more than ordinary attention. Her deep, plain mourning garb, the settled dejection of her countenance, which possessed considerable claim to beauty, and her low, sad voice, arrested the notice of the most careless who surrounded her. Edith was absent on the day of her arrival, but, meeting her at the tea-table on that evening, she was

struck with a new and unaccountable interest in the stranger. That she strongly resembled some familiar face she was certain; but, not having yet learned her name, she could arrive at no definite conclusions. The lady seemed absorbed with inward grief, so that the kindness of Edith's heart was at once enlisted in her behalf, and later in the evening she could not resist the impulse to seek her in her private parlor.

"Excuse me if this be an interruption, but I thought you might feel lonely to-night, it being the first you spend here," said Edith, hesitating to intrude upon the presence of the stranger.

"You are kind," said the lady, offering her a seat beside her own.

"I observe you are in mourning, like myself," continued Edith.

"Yes," replied the lady, brokenly; "I have lost all now."

In answer to Edith's look of interrogation, she continued: "The death of an only son, a short time since, has left me a childless widow. He was my pride, my hope in life, but was suddenly stricken down in the midst of a career of usefulness."

"Who was your son?" inquired Edith, in increasing interest.

"He was a settled minister in a distant city, and died while preaching in the pulpit of the parish of his former labors. I had long anticipated much from him, for he was my last earthly hope, and I had spared no sacrifice, no exertions, in his behalf. And, when he completed his studies and became

established in life, I felt that he had more than answered my expectations. I would gladly have gone and lived with him, to have encouraged and aided him; but, after his marriage, I saw him only once. Alas!" — she stopped, for she was reminded that she was addressing a stranger, and the secret wounds of her heart must not be disclosed.

"There is his picture," she resumed, opening a miniature under the light of the astral-lamp, "that was taken for his wife just before marriage, but he afterwards sent it to me."

Edith looked upon that picture long and attentively. It was the same which she had once seen in the hands of another, causing her so much pain. But now her countenance did not change, nor did she exhibit any emotion other than a stranger's curiosity. Yet how lifelike it was, as if it were just ready to address her with words of love! The flowing hair, the thoughtful, handsome eyes, the smile, half of sadness, half of joy, were all perfect — too perfect to be ever seen by the bereaved mother without tears.

"That is a good likeness," remarked Edith, as she returned the picture. "I knew Mr. Wellmont, your son."

"Is it possible?" rejoined Mrs. Wellmont. "Are you from the city in which he resided?"

"No, madam; I formerly resided in Waterbury."

"And your name?"

"Is Edith Hale."

The hue of confusion, such as Mrs. Wellmont's face rarely wore, now mounted rapidly to her brow, while her thin lips were colorless as death.

"You were aware that I was his mother before seeking me here?" inquired the lady, after a bitter pause; for the thought that Edith had come to her from motives of mere triumph was now suggested.

"On the contrary," Edith replied, "I did not learn your name until now."

The cause of Mrs. Wellmont's emotion was not wholly understood by Edith, for she did not know that Mr. Wellmont had been chiefly influenced by his mother in discontinuing his attentions to her. She was therefore spared an embarrassment which Mrs. Wellmont felt keenly.

"Your son somewhat resembled you," renewed Edith, who attributed the lady's emotion to her overcoming grief.

"He was like me less in heart than in appearance, and was altogether too pure for earth," said Mrs. Wellmont.

"Yes, he was a good man," said Edith, as calmly as if speaking of an ancient relative. "I recollect him with gratitude, for he assisted me when my circumstances in life were so humble that few in his position would have noticed me at all. As the slightest return I can make, I shall take pleasure in rendering any assistance to you, madam, which is in my power, while I remain near you."

Mrs. Wellmont could not reply, but her eyes were eloquent with gratitude through tears.

"I hope you will soon feel at home here with us," continued Edith, rising to leave, after other conversation.

"Solitude is better for a mourner," replied Mrs. Wellmont. "This place can never seem like home to me."

Mrs. Wellmont no longer wondered why her son had so loved Edith, for her intelligence and sweetness of manners could not fail to win her admiration. In vain she tried to excuse herself for her unfortunate influence, by a recollection of Edith's former inferior position. Now, in her decline of years, with her health and strength impaired, Mrs. Wellmont found herself in poverty, with no relative on whom to fasten the most distant hope of receiving assistance, for nothing could have been more repugnant than the idea of applying to her son's widow for aid. On this, the first day of her experience of her new life, her prospect had seemed cheerless indeed; the duties required appeared too onerous for her strength, and too humiliating for her pride; and, had it not been for her necessities, she would have repented her acceptance of the place. But, now that she had been so kindly encouraged by a stranger, — one, too, from whom, of all others, she least deserved kindness, — a little brightness gathered over the dark horizon. The thought that one whom her son had loved was near her became a consolation; and nothing seemed so pleasant now as the prospect of enjoying Edith's society.

Meanwhile, Edith sat late by her window in the summer night, and communed with her own heart; for, not to have recalled the past, after what had lately transpired, would have been impossible. She became surprised at the change she had experienced since her acquaintance with Mr. Wellmont. Then it seemed impossible that life would ever wear a bright or hopeful hue for her again. Now she saw that were one in

all respects like him to meet her with the offer of his affections, it would be in vain. She scarcely realized that the scenes through which she had passed, the expansion of her faculties by association with varied minds of superior cultivation, and with the activity of the world, had brought a different ideal to her thought; and yet not all an ideal, for there was a living original to the picture. She was content now, as she found that she had been led by a Providence which had proved its wisdom and goodness; though, when she had chosen in wilfulness a way for herself, it had seemed unsearchable and without mercy.

Edith proved herself a true friend to Mrs. Wellmont, as their acquaintance matured. Beset with many trials in her new situation, her life would have been unpleasant, indeed, had it not been for Edith's love and assistance.

Whenever Edith could persuade Mrs. Wellmont to go out with her, it was a rare pleasure; for, being perfectly familiar with the surrounding places, such walks proved very agreeable, as well as beneficial, to her friend. Mrs. Wellmont's natural temperament was averse to the confusion of a city; and she often spoke mournfully of the quiet and beauty of the country, in contrast.

"Then I may abandon all hope of getting you contented with your present home," said Edith, on one occasion, after such a walk.

"I should be resigned wherever I must needs be," replied Mrs. Wellmont; "and I am in a great measure consoled for this change in my life by your kind attentions"

"For my own part," said Edith, "I prefer the city at least two thirds of the year, for its activity and variety; and I think, by and by, you will become accustomed to town life."

"Never!" said Mrs. Wellmont, sadly; "this unceasing tumult abstracts all peace from my existence. The green fields, the stillness and luxuriant comfort of a retired country home, seem now to me like heaven upon earth."

"Did I so feel, I would leave here at once," said Edith.

"I think not, my dear child, if you were in advanced years, with no other way to obtain your daily bread. I am glad and thankful for a home anywhere."

One Saturday evening, Edith was summoned from Mrs. Wellmont's room, whither she had gone after a day of unusual fatigue, to the parlor, to meet her uncle.

"Well, Dithy," he said, upon her appearance, "you did not visit your old uncle this afternoon, as usual."

"I felt very sorry that I was obliged to be engaged nearly all day," said Edith; "the term draws to its close, and my duties multiply rapidly. I am glad that you have taken the trouble to come and see me, instead."

"I could n't stay away very well this time, when I found you did not come."

"You are very good," said Edith; "and I hope I shall soon be able to repay some of your kindness."

"Dear child," said her uncle, with unusual feeling, "we



must not trust much in our hopes; they are unstable as water."

"True," said Edith; "but it is pleasant to hope when we are planning for the benefit of others, to say nothing of ourselves."

"Dithy," spoke her uncle, abruptly, after some commonplace observations, "you have known what it is to be what the world calls poor?"

"Yes, sir; I have been very poor," replied Edith.

"What did you trust in, then, child?"

"In Heaven," replied Edith, reverently, "as I hope I ever do."

"Do you think that such a trust—a mere speculative faith, a chimera—is sufficient to sustain you through whatever chance may turn up in your lot? Think well. Life, you know, is made up of all sorts of trouble,—sharp as steel, and hard as flint."

"I know in whom I have trusted," replied Edith. "He has promised to be a father to the fatherless; to help all those who take him for their portion. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.'"

"Well," said the old man, pulling his beard, as he did when peculiarly interested, "I have no objection to your deriving all the happiness from imagination which is possible. Rather a childish business, though!"

Edith now looked very sadly upon her uncle, in reply to which he laughed, and called her a good girl with some fool-

ish notions. A moment later, however, his face was composed into the look it had worn at the first, which was, Edith thought, a little new.

"Well do I remember," said Edith, "in those times of my life when I have been cast into deep affliction, the peace and resignation which have been vouchsafed me in return for my prayer for divine help; not always in my own way, but ever, as it eventually proved, in the very best way for my good."

"Dithy, you never have yet been tried in your tenderest point. You have had trouble,— great trouble for a child like you. But suppose you thought yourself in possession of a fortune. You had the means of doing well for others and yourself. Everybody admired you, because you were so fortunate. But you loved one more than all, because you believed him worthy of your love. You should suddenly lose your fortune; in consequence of which event your friends knew you no more, and he whom you loved deserted you. How, then, would you feel?"

"Wherefore do you talk so strangely to-night, dear uncle?" inquired Edith, paling with a sudden suspicion of hidden meaning in his words.

"I may as well tell you about it first as last," he returned; "though the Lord knows I don't like to."

"About what?" continued Edith, anxiously.

"Your law-case has come on again, and —"

"It has not yet been decided?"

"Yes; I was in court, and heard the whole."

Edith clasped her hands upon her uncle's knee, and looked upon him with all the anxiety of her soul in her face ; but she could not ask the important question — *how* her case had resulted.

"Dear child," said her uncle, taking her hands within his own, "I feel very sorry for you."

Her eyes fell, for she knew now that she had lost her cause.

"Yes," said he, "you have divined the truth ; the decision *has* gone against you."

Edith uttered no response ; but her whole frame trembled violently, while her uncle drew her nearer to himself, and said : "But don't lay it to heart, Dithy ; we shall live some way. I have got two whole hands, if not feet ; and, while I can earn a dollar, you shall share it with me. I knew, when I first met you to-night, that you had not heard of it, though I supposed your lawyer would have sent you word."

"When was it decided ?" asked Edith.

"Yesterday."

"And a whole day has passed since !" exclaimed Edith, bitterly.

"I expected you every hour to-day to come to me, or I should have seen you before," said her uncle.

"I refer to Mr. Oliver," said Edith, "who told me, the last time I saw him at his office, that, as soon as the case was decided, he would come in person to let me know. And, although I had refused to see him here before, I consented that he should come then."

"This man is unworthy of you," said her uncle, impatiently, "and I am glad he has shown himself in his true character of fortune-hunter."

"Was not the case well conducted by him?" pursued Edith.

"Yes; he pleaded remarkably well, I should say, to give every devil his due."

"Please, uncle, don't speak thus of Hugh Oliver. He has been a good friend to me; and, if he forsakes me now, I cannot forget his *past* kindness," said Edith.

"*He'll* forget his kindness, now you have lost your fortune," said her uncle.

"I have seen so many bitter troubles," almost groaned Edith, "it is very hard to bear this. I must go alone; you will excuse me this once, dear uncle, I know."

"Well, Dithy," said he, rising to leave, "I'll come and see you again soon, and help you lay your plans for the future. Keep up a good heart, dear child," he concluded, kissing her, affectionately.

Edith was too much troubled to say more. Her heart was full to breaking.

She went to the solitude of her own room, but not to weep. Edith had naturally a temperament of rebellious passions; the accustomed loveliness and serenity of her manner were the result of long and careful self-government, by the influence of her mother, and the higher principle of her life. When such fierce trial came, it was well that she had this trust, of which she had spoken to her uncle.

Hour after hour she walked, while she struggled with her sorrow, every step beating the knell of her hopes, so late brilliant and fervid, till all around her had subsided into the pulseless silence of the night. Then she looked forth from her window, through which the moon shone in long, spectral lines, and questioned if the dead, whom she had loved on earth, were looking down in pity on her now. She thought of the friend of her youth, the gentle, affectionate Mary, and how tranquil she was now, freed from the conflict of life.

“O! that I, too, had died and gone home then!” she exclaimed. “A death fearful, awful, like hers, which endured but for a moment, is nothing to a life like mine!”

She remembered she had spoken unworthily of herself, and she wept for the first time since the knowledge of her woe. Words of hope and consolation flowed on the tide of her grief, and gradually the unrest of her soul gave place to peace. As in the Indian myth, the spirits of singing stars, who make melody upon the strings of the air in the silent time of night, angels whispered to her in harmony. The church-clock struck the hour of midnight, but she knew it not, for she was lost in prayer.

When the moon had gone down she lighted her lamp, and, taking a little book given her by her mother, which was a compendium of select passages of Scripture, she read words as sweet as the little book in the vision. Thus she sought consolation, till the bitterness of the first overwhelming draught

of her cup had passed. And then, like the white-robed angels which stood before the Lamb, there was a palm in her hand!

At last she fell asleep, with praises in her heart.

The hours of the next day moved on iron hinges. It was the Sabbath, and the silence of the time left Edith unmolested in her reflections.

In the afternoon, she was considering whether she were able to attend church, when she was informed that her uncle waited to see her. She went to him with surprise, for she knew that visitors were not permitted there on the Sabbath.

"I felt troubled about you, dear child," he said, "and I could not stay away after what passed last night. So, being your uncle, and representing it was a very urgent case, I got in to see you. Such rules as these places have!" he added, impatiently; "I wonder they don't teach you to think by rule!"

"They do, uncle," replied Edith, with simplicity, "but you must be aware of the necessity of rules in —"

"I am aware of no such thing!" he interrupted; "I have come to get you to go out with me."

"Where, uncle?"

"Anywhere, so that you go out. You must have a change of air and scene. I knew you would not walk to-day unless I made you."

"To walk, except to and from church, is against the rule here," replied Edith.

"The rule again! I tell you that you must and shall go!"

You look as pale and as cold as snow, here on this bland summer day. You will die, in this way!"

"I can go with you," said Edith, after a later reflection, "if you will agree to accompany me to church. That will suit me and the rules here."

"But not me!" said her uncle, decidedly. "I have not been inside of a synagogue, a chapel, or a steeple-house, since I landed on these shores."

"Well, I cannot walk with you on any other condition," said Edith, "and I should like to go to church with you very much, dear uncle. You can scarcely refuse me this pleasure?" she added, pleadingly.

"Be it so then!" replied her uncle, with a round oath; "but I'd as willingly stand on one foot till I had made a hole in a rock, as the Mussulmans say Adam did, or kiss the Pope's great toe a hundred times, as to go to one of your churches and be obliged to hear a priest let off his stuff!"

They decided upon going to the neighboring city, that the walk might be as long as possible. Edith demurred a little on account of her uncle's lameness; but he said nothing would hurt him that day, only going inside of a meeting-house.

Edith led the way to a church into which she had sometimes gone when she resided in that vicinity. The fervency and power of the preacher had always absorbed her attention, and she was anxious that her uncle might receive a favorable impression.

They were left to remain some time in the vestibule, for

their plain exterior failed to attract the notice of the sexton. At length, after many others had been more fortunate, and conducted to the higher seats, they were shown to a back pew, in which sat some very queer and inferior looking people. For a moment Edith's brow flushed with pain, but better thoughts succeeded. Her uncle dropped his head upon his cane, and seemingly fell asleep. The sound of the organ did not arouse him from his position, as Edith had hoped; neither did the rising of the great congregation. He remained, like one who is determined to make the best of an infliction till it is fairly through.

The preacher arose, and, in his simple, impressive manner, without preface or preamble, announced his text. In the voice of the speaker it was a poem, set to a melodious strain. He had not spoken long before Edith saw that her uncle was struggling within himself against the words he heard; for he moved uneasily upon his seat, and he pulled his long beard impatiently. Whether he or the preacher would obtain the mastery was the question. As the speaker proceeded, unfolding treasure after treasure, new and old, and interspersing all with a beauty and pathos which few could hear insensibly, Edith saw with pleasure that her uncle had become as attentive as even she could desire. An unusually striking and effective application had brought him upright, and lighted his dark, stern face with interest.

When the preacher had concluded his discourse, and called the people to prayer, the old man arose and remained reverently, as in unconscious harmony with the spirit of the place.



At the close of the exercises, Edith was somewhat surprised, on turning to leave the house, to find that her uncle was not disposed to go.

"I came in to please you, and now you must stay to please me," he said.

When the congregation had nearly all left the house, he informed Edith that he was going to speak to "that priest." She believed he was beside himself, but she durst not offer any remonstrance. Anxiously she saw him hobbling up the aisle toward the pulpit, every uneven and heavy step sounding loudly through the empty house, and his odd, rough exterior contrasting forcibly with that of the divine. She well-nigh repented that she had come now.

The preacher met the old man with evident curiosity and surprise, for such an encounter was not familiar to him. Edith was too distant to hear the conversation, but she was reassured when she saw that her uncle was received graciously. In reply to his words, the divine, ordinarily grave and somewhat reserved, spoke to him with interest, even with deference. Her uncle did not detain him long, and as he turned away Edith saw him transfer a small package from his pocket to the hand of the minister, with a hasty explanation.

When Edith was joined by her uncle, and they were fairly by themselves in the street, she inquired minutely of the interview.

"I went to him for the purpose," said he, "of seeing how a man of his fine black cloth would meet an odd old fellow,

like me. I wanted to know if he would carry out his religion, which he talks so smoothly about."

"And you were not disappointed?" said Edith.

"No!" he said, with an oath, which was too foreign to be interpreted; "that is as good as a priest can be. If he can stand such a test as I put him to, he will do; he is sea-worthy and heaven-worthy. He asked me to come and hear him again, and call on him at his residence."

"What was it you gave him, as you left him, if you please?"

"Did you see that?" replied the old man, now somewhat embarrassed. "He had done so well, I wanted to give him something. But, curse my poverty! I had only a few old papers in my pocket, which I brought from abroad. They were curious prayers of the pagans, and some written charms, &c., which I thought he might like to look at, and perhaps use at some time in his figurations."

At this moment Edith's attention was arrested by the appearance of a lady who was approaching them upon the same side of the street. She was attired in great splendor, and her handsome, haughty face was radiant with smiles as she glanced up into the face of her companion, whom Edith recognized with painful agitation.

"Observe these people who are meeting us," she said to her uncle, in a low, excited voice.

Both the lady and gentleman passed them without looking in their direction, although the lady was obliged to draw

away her superb garments to prevent them from brushing those of Edith.

"What is all this?" asked her uncle, directly. "Child! you tremble like a wounded bird!"

"Did you not see him?" said Edith.

"See who? I noticed only the woman dressed out like a flaunting sultana."

"The gentleman was Hugh Oliver, and he was walking with Hada Regleton, your sister's oldest daughter."

"What was he walking with her for?" asked her uncle, angrily.

"I can't tell!" answered Edith, endeavoring to control her emotion; "the report is probably true that there is an engagement existing between them."

"The fool!" responded her uncle; "he thinks to get money there, but he is mistaken. I have learned that Regleton is on the verge of ruin. But, if Oliver has a mind to choose such a thing as that, let him take his chance. He will see his blunder when it is too late."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### EDEN.

THE next morning, the angel of care rolled away the stone before the door of another week, through which hastened madly the renewed bustle and toil of life. Edith could not avoid reflecting upon the future which now frowned so gloomily before her. The thought that she was once more thrown upon her own resources in a cold and indifferent world compelled her to consider the course which she must pursue, notwithstanding the engrossing nature of her present duties.

Before the close of the morning, she was summoned to the drawing-room, to meet a gentleman. The messenger left her before she had inquired the name of her visitor; but her heart whispered it was Hugh Oliver, who had come at last.

"After all," she said to herself, "he wishes only to return my papers, and consummate all business between us."

But the thought that Oliver might be waiting for her inspired her with thrilling emotion, succeeded by a deathly weight of sadness, as she remembered the change in her fortune. When she reached the door, she was obliged to pause

to collect herself; for her whole frame trembled, and she felt the blushes settling into deepness upon her cheeks.

Unclosing the door, at length, she entered with hesitancy, when she perceived that Oliver was not there. Her heart turned to ice, and, notwithstanding every effort, the tears rushed to her eyes. Instead of the one whom more than all others she wished to see, awaited a gentleman of sixty-five winters, smiling and benevolent — one of the officials of the trustees of that institution.

“Are you ill, this morning, Miss Hale?” he inquired, directly.

Edith faltered an excuse for her appearance; but soon recovered herself, as the gentleman was an old friend who had shown her much kindness, and she could scarcely have been better repaid for her disappointment. He had come to invite her to accept a vacant situation in the board of teachers for the next term.

“Several applications have been made,” he said; “among which is that of the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree, of Birhampton, in behalf of his daughter, who is in the same class with you; but we unite in giving you our preference.”

“I am very grateful, sir, for your offer; and I will exert myself to discharge the duties expected of me.”

At this moment she discovered a gentleman entering the room, his face partially averted; but she knew him at once. She stopped in surprise. The trustee was bowing himself out; but she was sadly inattentive. She saw nothing, remembered nothing, now, but the presence of Hugh Oliver. The door closed.

"Miss Hale," said Oliver, rising, and now looking fully upon her with his piercing eyes, "I regret that I have sought you so unseasonably. It seems that I have come here to witness your acceptance of an offer of —"

He could not conclude his words; for he saw a new light in Edith's eyes, which baffled his penetration. Notwithstanding her contending emotions, she was smiling so that her whole face was lighted with humor.

"I have some curiosity to know what these 'duties' are, which you promise so submissively to discharge," he resumed, quickly divining, from her looks, that he had for once made himself slightly ridiculous in judging upon hasty impressions. "Is he a widower, with as many responsibilities as those set down to the account of the wife of John Rogers?"

"I shall not submit to be thus questioned by you," said Edith.

"I was not prepared for such an encounter as this, when I had planned a meeting with you, Edith, after what has passed — very different, to say the least."

At these words, the smile fled from Edith's face, succeeded by a look of keen suffering.

"Miss Hale," said Oliver, now seating himself near her, "I am very sorry to inform you that I have lost your case."

As she did not manifest surprise, he continued, "You may have heard of it before."

She bowed assent.

"I cannot say that I regret the decision," resumed Oliver. Edith started now; for such words from the man in whom

she had reposed so much respect and confidence, under the circumstances, overwhelmed her with anguish. She looked upon him for an explanation; but he sat examining some papers which he had withdrawn from his pocket.

"Dear Edith," he said, at length, when he saw the tears rushing to her eyes, "you may think my words harsh and unfeeling; but, had this contested fortune fallen to your possession, I could not have told you what is in my heart—how very dear you are to me. You would not have believed the truth of my professions of love. I have studied your character sufficiently to know this. I did my best for you, as it was, and trusted that time would vindicate my motives, if you were successful. But I pleaded one suit in vain—shall it be so in the other?"

Edith yielded to a fresh outburst of tears; for such words were wholly unexpected. The consolation, late as it came, was doubly sweet now.

"I should have sought you," resumed Oliver, after an embarrassed pause, "as I promised you, immediately upon the announcement of the decision in court; but I delayed to effect a purchase of your late residence in the city, in time that nothing should be disturbed or removed. I wished, too, not to meet you with the unhappy intelligence of the lost suit, until I could, as a kind of offset, give you a little surprise. I hoped to have settled the business with Sykes, so as to come to you by Saturday; but he was so obstinate and vexatious, that the bargain was not concluded until this morning. And here," he added, producing a paper from his package, "is the legal in-

strument which makes you the undisputed possessor of that house and all it contains."

"I cannot understand you," faltered Edith, not well knowing, in her confusion, what reply to make.

"Nothing can be plainer," said Oliver. "I offer you this, and all that pertains to me; and, if you have a mind to give me your heart and hand in return, I shall consider the matter as settled."

"I have heard that you are engaged to marry, already."

"To whom?" asked Oliver, with a puzzled look.

"Miss Regleton."

"Did you think, ever, that I would marry that cousin of yours? Now tell me the truth, Edith."

"May I ask how you knew she was my cousin?" answered Edith. "*She* did not tell you the fact?"

"No; Mr. Raymond mentioned it to me, casually. She has spoken to me of you, but not as a relative."

"Nor as a friend," said Edith, with decision.

"What she said was lost upon me wholly," continued Oliver. "I never had a thought of marrying Hada Regleton, and I have not certainly given occasion for any one to think so. I have of late, especially, avoided her as much as possible. Yesterday, on returning from church, she joined me, having left her father's carriage to walk that way; but I excused myself as soon as it was convenient."

There was another pause now, broken at last by Oliver.

"Edith," he said, "you do not express yourself very confidentially to me. Here you sit as silently and coldly as if



it were nothing that my entire happiness depends upon your decision."

"My appreciation of your kindness is too great to be expressed," replied Edith, with much emotion.

"Stay," said Oliver, drawing her to his heart; "those are not the words for which I wait."

"What would you have me say?" ventured Edith, blushing under her tears.

Oliver whispered his reply, while he pressed his lips to hers, in one long, rapturous kiss.

It was a moment of exquisite, nay, almost perfect bliss, — such bliss as is not often known on earth. If the worldling be disposed to laugh or growl a contemptuous "pshaw!" having never known such love, or having forgotten it as one of the follies of his youth, let him pause before darkening such golden light by words without knowledge. Such a scene is a reflection of the first love of Eden — a link, strong and burnished, which extends far back to the time "when the morning stars sang together."

"Now, dearest Edith, tell me all about that 'widower,'" said Oliver, at length.

She smilingly complied.

"I shall not let you accept his 'offer,'" commented Oliver; "you will have other 'duties' for next term. So just send in your resignation at the earliest opportunity."

"I am not certain about that," said Edith.

"I am; for you must live with me in our home by that time; at least, if you will let me live in your house."

"I must not omit to remind you," said Edith, "that I have an uncle who has been unfortunate, and, though not exactly dependent upon me at present, is very dear to me —"

"He shall live with us ; our home shall be equally his own. I recollect hearing you speak of your affection for him, and I know that I shall also esteem him."

"You are very good," said Edith, affected by his kindness.

"And you will exert yourself to discharge your duties so that I may not repent my preference in your behalf?" said Oliver, jocosely alluding again to the scene which he had partially witnessed.

"I decline to promise," replied Edith.

"But not by and by, when the question is put in solemn form !"

How much longer they would have remained thus interested in this conversation is uncertain, had not Edith been reminded of the necessity of her presence elsewhere, as it was in the time of the school exercises.

Oliver reluctantly took his leave, reminding Edith, however, that she must never doubt him hereafter ; to which she consented, with the provision that he was not to allude to her "offer" again.

On the afternoon of that day, Edith had a long interview with her uncle, in which there were some tears shed, a few strong exclamations pronounced on his part, and many pleasant, hopeful words interchanged.

"Well," said her uncle, when he had heard all, "Oliver has turned out better than I imagined. You have had a

pretty round time of trial, Dithy; and, if a brighter day is breaking over your young head, nobody can rejoice more heartily than your poor old uncle. You must have got help from something which I know nothing of, to have behaved so well through the scenes you have passed under my eye. I expected yesterday, as much as I ever expected anything, to have found you crazy, or sick, or broken all to atoms some way. But, instead, you wore the same old smile, even after you met Oliver with that dashing sprig of Regleton, only a little sadder, it may be."

"I take no praise to myself," replied Edith; "if I do anything well, it is done in the strength of Him who has promised to help those who trust in his name."

A few days after these events Edith entered the seminary hall at the close of one of her recitations, and saw in the desk of the principal the august figure of the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree. It cost her no effort to recognize him. She would have known him years afterward without difficulty, for he had often haunted her memory, sleeping and waking, since her examination before the school-committee of Birhampton.

The pupils were requested to give attention to a "few remarks" by the reverend visitor. Thereupon the gentleman arose, and, looking over and above the assembly of young ladies with one of his loftiest looks, which appeared to express, "Did ever you see such a man as I am before?" he began his harangue. Although he spoke with great and studied emphasis, neither his sentiments nor words were emphatic. He was deliberate, but it was the deliberation of the snail.

When he had made an end, after wearying all his auditors but his daughter, the young ladies were dismissed again to their several classes. But Edith, to her unfeigned surprise, was bidden to the presence of the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree and the principal.

"We sent for you," said the latter, after having briefly announced Edith to the reverend gentleman, "to ascertain if you adhere to your decision not to accept the situation offered you as a teacher in the institution. Miss Hale was entitled to our first choice," he observed, by way of explanation to Mr. Crabtree, "because she holds the highest rank in the senior class. If she resigns, the application of your daughter will next receive attention."

"New circumstances render it necessary for me to decline," said Edith; "but, if I may be allowed on this occasion to intrude my wishes, I would add that I hope Miss Crabtree may be successful in her application — that she may be spared the unhappiness which once a poor girl knew, on being rejected as an applicant for a school in Birhampton, by her father."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Crabtree, "is this —"

"Yes, sir," answered Edith, perceiving she was recognized, "I am the one to whom I have referred."

"I had no idea — I —" he stopped, with a very red face.

"Thanks to a gracious Providence, and to kind, noble-hearted friends, among whom I reckon the authorities of this institution," said Edith, "I have been favored since that time with blessings far exceeding the pain and mortification I then experienced."

So saying, she left the Rev. Hyliscus Crabtree to his own reflections.

The next time that Oliver met Edith he produced a letter from his uncle, the major, who was highly delighted that his nephew was about to be married, and entirely approved his choice. He wrote that he should expect Edith to become his guest at the expiration of her engagement at school, when he hoped his home would be prepared for her reception. As his housekeeper had died during the past season, he had been unable to supply her place, and his house was at the mercy of servants at present; but he should make new arrangements immediately, in honor of her visit.

Edith listened to this thoughtfully, and when the letter was concluded she said,

"I think I can procure a housekeeper for your uncle who would fill the place admirably."

"You must recollect that the place is retired, and one accustomed to active life might not be contented with such a home," said Oliver.

"I will manage it, and inform you directly," said Edith.

When Oliver had left her, Edith went to Mrs. Wellmont. Her face was radiant with pleasure, as she exclaimed,

"I think I have got a new home in the country for you, where everything is beautiful, quiet, and just to your liking."

Mrs. Wellmont looked her surprise and curiosity. Edith then proceeded to inform her of all the plans for herself, not omitting her own contemplated marriage.

"And now," she added, "if you will only go there, Mrs.

Wellmont, at the close of school I will join you on a visit, and shall we not be happy together in that pleasant country place?"

Mrs. Wellmont could not reply for her emotion, for never more forcibly than then did she recall her words to her son, when he had written affectionately of Edith: "Where, then, is my prospect of a home with you in my declining years?"

Edith thought that her sadness proceeded from a memory of her dependence, and said,

"Your duties will be light, merely superintendence; and a home can hardly fail to be pleasant with Major Oliver. I shall take care that you be recommended rightly; but his former acquaintance with your son will be your highest recommendation to him, and to all the people of Waterbury."

"Dear Edith!" returned Mrs. Wellmont, with tears, "I have no words to tell you how I value this kindness, which, believe me, I do not merit. Nothing could be more pleasant to me than such a home, and especially among those whom my son so well loved."

"Then I will get Hugh to write to his uncle at once," said Edith.

This plan proved successful; and Mrs. Wellmont was not more gratified with the prospect of a change in her home than was Edith in its accomplishment.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### LITTLE IDDY AND HIS MOTHER.

THE last days of the fall of the year bring gloom to all, even to those who are habitually thoughtless. The air is permeated with a chill ; the leaves, but late so brilliant, lie withered and sere upon the ground ; and all nature seems to pause, like a heart in the foreboding of calamity. The clouds hang over the earth like watchers over the bed of the dying ; they watch the death of the year.

But, if we have hopes warm and bright for the approaching winter, this gloom is chased away by the first sunbeam that glistens aslant the icicles. We think of our comforts and pleasures, and are thankful, after all, for the cheerful cold season. Alas for those—the many who have no comforts or pleasures in the future of their reflections—whose hopes have all withered and died like the leaves ! So thought Maria Weston, as she sat in her low, cold chamber, on a gloomy afternoon in November. All the summer and autumn she had lived upon hope, the one hope which had clung to her through such poignant trials. Now that hope was gone. She had learned a tale from her seducer's own lips that had

blotted out the last ray of light in her heart. He was already married!

Each succeeding hour, which brought a memory of her hopeless sorrow, settled the wild excitement of her soul, which she had first felt after the knowledge, into a strong, deep calm. She looked forth from her narrow north window upon the gloomy earth with a rigid face, for the tears were all frozen to ice in her heart. The little Iddy nestled to her bosom, but she heeded him not. He had grown to be a beautiful babe, with large, melancholy eyes,

“Like the eyes of those who can see the dead!”

About his fair face twined delicate flaxen ringlets, like silken tassels around a tiny ear of grain. His mouth was like a rosebud, within the petals of which buzzes a honey-bee. But Maria thought not of his beauty now, for there was no longer beauty in anything to her. She thought only of shame and disappointment, two grim phantoms that haunted her wherever she looked. His little, soft hand wandered over her cheek unheeded, and his smile brought no return.

The little Iddy had no toys like other children, neither had he ever been caressed by a warm-hearted grandmother or aunt; and so he knew not what it was to lie in the downy nest of love, and open his ruby lips for the reception of choicely-selected blessings. Although as beautiful as a pearl, his cradle had been no golden shell. He had often felt cold and hunger, and the angel of tears watched by his hard pillow. His father had refused to provide for him longer, and had declared to



Maria his intention of causing him to be removed to an asylum. She feared to leave him now to go to the village, lest she might return and find his place vacant; for so had she been threatened if she refused her consent to the separation. Her babe was too dear to her to endure this thought for a moment.

Maria had failed in getting sufficient work for a livelihood as a seamstress, and she felt her disgrace too keenly to expose her destitution to the eyes of the world. Her last money was gone, and her room was cold and desolate. The winds howled mournfully along the chimney, and clattered the casements of the windows. The sky was lowering, and boded a storm. When Mrs. Linn called her to the evening meal, she answered, as she had frequently done of late, that she did not wish to eat; and so she remained by the window, and watched the coming on of the night. Presently she descried the lighted lamps in the homes of the village, which, in the glimmering, snowy air, looked like the lights of ships at sea.

"How happy they must be to-night, in their pleasant homes!" she exclaimed to herself; "for they are loved and have the comforts of life, and, more than all, they are not troubled with an ever-present sense of guilt, — at least, many of them are not."

Then she thought of one house in the village, which held a heart guiltier than her own, and the ice of her heart dissolved to burning tears. Her sobs awoke her babe, and he cried

loudly. He was now hungry, and his little hands and face were pinched and blue with the cold.

Maria hugged him to her bosom under an old shawl, and carried him softly until he slept again. Then she laid him on the bed, and proceeded to light a lamp. The old house-clock struck slowly and solemnly, but never so solemnly before to her. Those sounds called to her soul with an awful distinctness.

Some time after, Mrs. Linn's footsteps were heard slowly ascending the stairs, and presently she entered Maria's room. She held a candle, and a few sticks of dried herbs, which she had been getting in the adjoining attic.

"I thought I would just see if you were sick to-night," she said, "as I had to come up after something to make some tea for father. He don't feel so well."

"No, ma'am, I am not sick," answered Maria.

"Is Iddy asleep?"

She went to the bed and held her candle so that its light fell over the little face. Putting down her herbs, she drew up the clothes more closely about him, and felt of the hand which lay without on the pillow.

"He is too cold here, child," said Mrs. Linn; "you must bring him down to our fire, or he will freeze to death."

"I would rather not," said Maria; "and I can't afford to keep a fire here longer."

"Well, now," continued Mrs. Linn, taking a chair and pulling the folds of the shawl she wore together, "something must be done for you right away. It won't do for you and

that poor child to suffer here in this way. Whoever the child's father is, his heart is like a rock, or it would melt at the very thought. Father and I have been talking about it to-day. You must tell who the man is, and then legal steps must be taken for redress."

Maria sat with her eyes fastened upon the floor. At length she said, as if in the result of new reflections, "You shall know all to-morrow."

"It's of no use for you to keep silence longer," said Mrs. Linn; "my heart aches for you, and I advise you the same as if you were my own child."

These words of tender compassion fell upon Maria's heart softly.

"O, Mrs. Linn!" she replied, in a tone of startling distinctness, "could you know all I have suffered, the deception I have had to bear, you would pity me more than you do now. I am a poor orphan; and, had it not been for you, I should be an outcast to-night, homeless and friendless, while he who led me away into sin would live on in luxury and peace. I am a miserable, ruined girl; but I know that I have been cruelly ruined."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Linn, wiping her eyes under her spectacles, "I knew it must be so."

"In the last great day all will know it," said Maria.

She now arose to hush Iddy, who had become partially aroused by their voices, and thus disclosed to Mrs. Linn, behind where she had sat, her trunk open, and the articles which it had contained laid out upon the floor.

"What are you doing?" said Mrs. Linn. "It is too cold for such work as that."

"I wanted to look over my things to-night," replied Maria, returning to them hastily, and beginning to restore them to their place.

"Don't hurry them back on my account," said Mrs. Linn. "I like to see you careful. It is a good sign in young folks to keep their trunks in order."

"There isn't any good sign about me," said Maria; "I wanted to pack my clothes because ——" She stopped for her grief, and bent lower over her trunk.

All the articles, some of which she paused to examine, as if recalling old associations, she replaced, save a little box and Testament, which she retained, as if unwilling to shut them from her sight.

"What have you there that makes you so sober?" asked the old lady, seeing Maria look within the box. "It's enough to make a body cry to see you look as if you were taking leave of your best friend."

"Here," said Maria, discovering the contents of the box to Mrs. Linn, "is a lock of my mother's and father's hair." She then opened a small paper, and disclosed a tiny silken curl. "This," she continued, "I took from Iddy's head shortly after he was born."

There were also a plain gold ring which had belonged to Maria's mother, a piece of money that Mr. Linn had given Iddy, and a very small mitten of pink yarn.

"Where did you get that fairy thing?" asked Mrs. Linn, trying the mitten on her thumb.

"I knit it for my doll when I was a little girl," said Maria. "Alas! I was innocent and happy then!" she continued, with bitterness. "O, that I had died in those days, before I came to all this!"

Maria took the box again, and, before closing it, looked once more; but, as she did so, her glance fell upon the mirror on the under side of the lid. She started wildly, as if she had seen a dead face.

"This Testament," said Maria, when she had become more composed, "is one which Edith Hale gave me."

"That is a blessed girl; I miss her sadly," said Mrs. Linn.

"I have never forgot the words she used to say to me," continued Maria, with a sigh which seemed to proceed from the depths of her soul. "I thought, then, when she warned me against the consequences of some of my ways, that she was what is called squeamish and prudish, and I made light of what she said, sometimes; but now I see that she was right, and I was wrong. Those things seemed nothing then; but they were the first steps which led me to ruin at last."

"You are quite right now," said Mrs. Linn; "some girls think it is smart and charming to be pert and forward, and they are lifted up with attentions such as they ought never to receive for a moment. I always pity them, because they cannot see what is the result of such conduct. But, when they get in that way, it is useless, generally, to say anything

to them. They think kind admonitions only old-womanish notions, fit to be ridiculed and then forgotten."

"It is so pleasant," said Maria, with a voice of deep emotion, "for poor girls to be made of by those who are higher in the world! And they are foolish enough to think the flattering words are all just what they seem."

"True, true," said Mrs. Linn; "I feel that the greater sin lies with those who know better, and take pleasure in this ruin."

"O, my poor soul!" groaned Maria, in a tone which startled Mrs. Linn; "could all such persons look on what I have gone through, and then see my heart in all its agony to-night, they would shudder — they would —"

She stopped, with her eyes fixed on one point of the wall of the room; her colorless lips closed under her teeth sharply, till they were stained with blood, and she breathed huskily.

"I have hopes of you, Maria," said Mrs. Linn, now rising and taking her lamp to go down, "and I will pray that a better life may yet be yours."

"Thank you, Mrs. Linn; and I wish you would ask Father Linn to remember me to-night in his prayer," returned Maria. But her voice was still so odd that Mrs. Linn looked on her half surprised. Maria's face was turned away, so that she could not see her.

"I hope you will feel better in the morning, poor child!" concluded Mrs. Linn.

"I hope I shall," returned Maria.

Mrs. Linn had scarcely left her door before a heavy groan

came upon her ear. Afterward, that evening, she heard Maria walking to and fro in her chamber overhead, and the sounds fell so mournfully upon her heart, that she sat by the fire and wept.

But, when the hour for their devotions came, the steps ceased, and all was still. Fervently did those good people remember the poor, heart-trampled girl in their supplications before the God of all mercy, and thus peace came to their own souls. After prayer, by an impulse which was somewhat habitual to him, notwithstanding his illness, Mr. Linn broke forth into singing, and fell upon the words :

“ Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings ;  
Thy better portion trace ;  
Rise from transitory things,  
Toward heaven, thy native place.”

The next morning it was seen that a light snow had fallen during the night, so that all the earth was clothed in white. The naked branches of the trees looked toward the sky more gloomily than before, and the remnant stalks of the garden-bushes bowed themselves low with their burden of ice.

Mrs. Linn looked forth from her bedroom window and thought of the dead, as she had done for many years in connection with the first snow-fall of the season, because her only daughter had been laid in the ground the day before the first snow. As Maria did not appear, as usual, to assist her in her morning labors, she concluded that she had slept late in consequence of her last night's excitement, and deferred calling her.

Presently a neighbor came in of an errand, and incidentally inquired if any one were sick there.

"No ; — why ?" said Mrs. Linn.

"Because, I saw a light burning in one of your chambers twice in the night when I looked out. And the first thing this morning I noticed it was burning; and, if I am not mistaken, it is n't out yet," he replied.

"I am afraid Maria is sick," said Mrs. Linn ; "she looked miserably last night, and I have n't heard her stirring yet."

"You had better go and see, mother," said Mr. Linn.

The old lady ascended the stairs very slowly, for she was troubled with her rheumatic difficulties on such mornings, and, reaching the top, she paused to recover her breath. Then she delayed a moment, to put in its place a bundle of dried herbs, which had fallen to the floor the last night ; for she was one who never could pass by on the other side when she saw any thing out of order or requiring her care, however in haste she might be.

On opening Maria's door, she found that there surely was the light burning on the table, but so feebly that it went out with the first current of the air.

"Are you sick, this morning? It is late, Maria," she said, approaching the bed. No answer being returned, she brought down her spectacles over her eyes, and discovered that Maria was not there, neither was her child.

"What!" she exclaimed ; "she has not gone! I thought it was strange, last night, that she should pack her things so carefully."



She raised the curtain to admit the light, that she might see if the trunk were there. But now she stood motionless, with her eyes fixed upon a particular point of that chamber. Her face was as pale as the white kerchief crossed over her bosom. Before her, suspended from a spike in the beam of the ceiling, was Maria, the little Iddy's head falling over her neck, so that the silken curls shaded his face, the small bare feet held within one hand of the mother, and with the other the little form drawn closely to her own, while against his cheek rested her rigid, blood-stained lips! The rope was fastened around the neck of both, and the death-agony had been shared together!

Mrs. Linn paused aghast; she, who had so many times been called to witness varied forms of woe, was never moved as in that moment. But, gathering strength to reach the stairs, she called the neighbor to join her quickly. Her voice revealed the mastering fear of her soul, and she was obeyed in consternation.

"Be calm," she said, "and cut that rope as quickly as possible."

He drew forth his knife, but he could not advance; the spectacle was too awful, and he staggered to a chair for support. Mrs. Linn was compelled to perform the office herself. It was too late. Death had been in that chamber for hours!

The word of alarm spread rapidly, so that in a short time many of the neighbors had gone in with pale faces and hushed voices, but not so many as in cases of ordinary death. Few, comparatively, could behold that horror-stricken scene. They

wept at home, however ; and parents looked upon their children with a warning they had never felt before. The young people felt nervously sad, and silently regretted that they had hitherto regarded the erring girl so coldly.

On looking about the chamber, one of the persons who had come in discovered a paper on the table, covered with writing, and evidently left there by design. As he finished reading it, he uttered an exclamation of astonishment, which arrested the attention of all within hearing.

"What is it?" inquired several voices.

"This is dreadful!" he returned. "Who could have thought it? Now I can believe anything!"

And he read aloud the last words which the poor girl had written :

"I cannot live. I shall take my dear child with me, that he may never know sin and shame. The name of his father I tell, that others may not be deceived, as I have been. It is MR. LOOMEY. I forgive him now. May God forgive me, and reward all those who have been kind to me! MARIA."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### CONCLUSION.

IN the sick chambers of a royal household in Europe are burned tapers of the candleberry myrtle, for the aromatic odors which they emit, permeating the atmosphere with a delicious softness. But, in the sick room where love, pure and fervent, sends forth its genial light, the peace which settles over the heart exceeds all ministration to the senses. In this light, "which is sweet and pleasant to the eyes," we can catch glimpses of heaven.

Such had become the sick chamber in which Edith had been called to attend her uncle for months — during all those brilliant autumn months, for which so many plans of happiness had been sketched. It was now the winter, and the earth was hoar and cold. The north god Uller, with a silver circle surrounding his chin, and with his imperial skates, had come forth, and asserted his dominion over the Rain-valleys. But Edith looked not on the earth with sad, regretful eyes; she had been happy in ministering to her uncle, and her heart was glad when she remembered the salutary effects his trial had wrought for him. His rugged, sceptical nature had

yielded to holy influences, and all things were now to him as though wearing the impress of God.

On one of the bright mornings of the new year, he said, "I have been thinking, Dithy, that you must have secretly got out of patience with your troublesome old uncle. You were enjoying yourself with your friends in the country, just in the blush of all your school honors, and looking forward to your marriage, when you were called to my bedside and confined here, till even you, with your good temper, must be ready to wish I had died, or never have lived."

"Have I ever shown impatience, dear uncle?" said Edith. "If I have, it was more than I felt."

"No, Dithy, you have been an angel of goodness to me. You have done more than I could have asked — and less, too, in some sense ; for, when I have requested you to leave me in charge of a nurse, and pursue your former plans for yourself, you have not heeded me."

"As soon," replied Edith, "could I have deserted a beloved parent under such circumstances."

"You shall not be troubled more with me," said her uncle. "I am gaining health and strength rapidly, though I cannot expect to be ever young again. You must leave me, now."

"When Oliver pays me his customary visit to-day," he added, as he saw her look of surprise, "I shall tell him I will keep you from him no longer. He must owe me a grudge for detaining you so long ; though, to do him justice, he has been as kind to me as a man could ; but I suppose it was all for your sake."

"We will never be separated, dear uncle, unless it be at your own preference," returned Edith. "Hugh and I have arranged it all — how you are to live with us. But I will not reveal more," she added, shaking her head, sagaciously.

"Well," said her uncle, "I can't understand how you can feel so kindly — so like children towards me —" His voice failed, and he was silent to hide his emotion.

By and by he fell asleep, and Edith made her fingers fly with a purpose, as she resumed a piece of work she was privately designing to shape into a gift for her uncle.

A few days later, Edith and her uncle took up their residence in their future home. On that evening the marriage of Oliver and Edith was to take place, with no guests present, save Major Oliver, Mrs. Wellmont, and the clergyman. Edith was saddened to enter the familiar rooms once more.

"Is not all here to your liking?" inquired Oliver.

"O, yes, your arrangements are perfect; but I cannot avoid thinking of those who are gone, with whom, so late, I shared this home. Their imprint is left on everything, and it breathes a sad threnody to my heart."

"If we see that those who dwelt within these walls before us," said Oliver, "who were girt earth-strong with wealth and power and love, were as nothing before the power of Him who holdeth all things in his hand, let us strive to walk humbly before God!"

Edith looked up on the face which of all others she most loved and feared, and felt that her happiness was safe in his keeping. But this assurance did not bring freedom.

"Why do you tremble, my bird?" he said, drawing her nearer to his heart.

"Because —" she began with hesitation; but, summoning her natural singleness of heart to her aid, continued, "there is no one on earth who causes me such embarrassment — nay, downright fear — as yourself."

"Then you do not love me, or, at least, but imperfectly."

"I have ever spoken the truth to you," said Edith.

Oliver sat down somewhat abruptly, and made Edith sit by him — so near, notwithstanding some faint struggles, that her dark hair shaded his face, as he bent his head to hers,

"I have a story to tell you," he said; "only a simple one, but true. There was once a poor boy, whose parents were both dead, and he had scarcely anything but himself and his mother's dying blessing. He went forth into the great world alone, and with a heart tremulous through fear. He was beset with temptations and sorrows, and day after day labored closely for only a modicum of life. But, when he was so weary and heart-worn that he could scarcely keep strength to live, he felt his mother's pale hand upon his head, and heard her dying words, — 'My son, be ever industrious, and faithful to the highest dictates of your conscience, and you will be blessed, not, perhaps, in your own way, for there may be a long night first.' There was a long and painful night; but ever in the gloom and straitened passes of the way he heard those words, and he persevered until he issued into the clear light of day. I have spoken of myself. Can you fear me now, dearest?"

"I love you more than ever, if possible," answered Edith, with tears; "but the old fear remains. It is well; for a woman was made to reverence him whom she accepts to be her companion and head in life. I believe that when she does not feel thus love is not fervid or strong in her heart."

"You little metaphysician!" exclaimed Oliver, "talking so demurely and oracularly of things about which you know nothing! In less than a year from this time, you will be pulling me about like a child, who knows not the meaning of the word reverence. You will tell my faults with a coolness which defies description, and —"

"There, now," interrupted Edith; "you have said quite enough of what *you* know nothing about."

"A woman will have her will in one way or another; so I suppose I may as well make up my mind to it first as last."

"Certainly," said Edith, merrily; but she was prevented from saying more by an imprisonment of her lips.

Edith now escaped as soon as possible, upon the plea that her uncle was waiting for her in an adjoining room; and she was followed by Oliver, who could not resist the impulse.

The invalid uncle was assisted above stairs that he might see the apartments which had been especially arranged for him, as a pleasant surprise. The warm south sunshine came in between the damask and lace curtains, and shed through all the room which was designed for his parlor a mellow cheerfulness.

"Here is your seat of state," said Edith, gayly point-

ing to a capacious chair, that looked comfortable enough for a monarch. "Hugh made this purchase on purpose for you, though I assisted in the selection."

throne," said her uncle; "and quite too good for an old man like me, with a traveller's negligent habits."

"But what are these, Dithy?" he asked, as his eye fell upon a pair of beautifully-embroidered slippers, which were set on a velvet cushion before the chair.

"They are for you, dear uncle," replied Edith. "I know they will fit you; for I took a pair which you had worn for their model."

There was a covert, mysterious smile upon her uncle's face, as he held them, and examined them admiringly.

"Very fine," he remarked, at length; "I only hope they may prove as fortunate to the giver as did the glass slipper to Cinderella."

"Do you think, sir, you can be happy here with us?" inquired Oliver, when all the various arrangements for pleasure and comfort had been displayed to the old man.

"Yes, dear uncle," joined Edith, "will it seem like home to you?"

"God bless you, children!" he exclaimed; but he could not say what he would. He sat down in his chair, and covered his eyes with his thin hand.

"I am weak, yet," he murmured, after a pause, "and I can't control myself as I could once."

Oliver then led Edith quietly from the room, divining



that her uncle would prefer to be left to his own reflections in that hour.

Shortly after this, they were summoned to welcome Major Oliver and Mrs. Wellmont. The major was never in better spirits.

"Indeed, I feel young again," he said; "I think now I shall live to be a hundred, at least."

"Philosophers are best when they are old," said his nephew. "I believe you belong to that class."

"Well, those of your profession are not," rejoined the major; "for there is an old saying that, 'physicians, like beer, are best when they are old; and lawyers, like bread, when they are young and new.' But physicians are undoubtedly best when they are so old they can't practise."

"At your old war again? I expected there would have been a truce between you and the doctors before this time," said Hugh.

"Never," replied the major, with a flourish of his arm, "until I sleep in the vaults of our illustrious ancestors!"

"What if they should abstract your body for dissection?"

"Then my spirit would take vengeance. I would compel them to take all the noxious drugs they ever mixed in their deadly conceits. — But I came not here," he added, abruptly, "to talk of death and dead bodies; rather of marriage and the living. And this reminds me that I have something to say to you in private. Mrs. Wellmont, will you retire to the

presence of Edith's uncle, while I remain and confer with my nephew and niece?"

After the major had concluded this mysterious parade, and was left alone with his wondering listeners, he subsided as suddenly into embarrassment. He evidently wished to say something which troubled his equanimity unusually.

"Do you wish to smoke, uncle," said Hugh, on seeing him produce his cigar-holder, and examine it abstractedly. "I will show you where you may be comfortable."

"No, you graceless boy, you know I don't want to smoke now! You are trying to puzzle me," he replied.

"If I could think what it is you wish to do or say, I would assist you with pleasure," continued Hugh.

"By the way," said the major, with a design to recover himself before he proceeded upon the business in hand, "I have a piece of news to tell, before I forget it. As I was coming to the city, to-day, I found an old acquaintance from L——, and he told me that Mr. Wellmont's widow that was is just married to Mr. Phaniel."

"Indeed!" said Edith; "we heard, some little time since, that he was about to marry another."

"That lady gave him the slip before going to the altar, having found a man of some distinction who pleased her fancy better. Mr. Phaniel lost no time, then, in securing Mrs. Wellmont. We Waterbury people have not completed the erection of a monument over the grave of her first husband yet in our cemetery, and it seems but yesterday since he died. But all this does not reach the point," continued the major;

"you see, we — that is, the elder Mrs. Wellmont and I — have been thinking, of late, that it would be a fine thing to have another wedding take place with yours."

Edith and Hugh exchanged glances of heightened surprise.

"You know we have no minister now in Waterbury, for that man Loomey absconded very suddenly after the death of poor Maria Weston, taking Mrs. Witherell with him, it is supposed, for she has not been heard of since. But, if he had remained there in good repute, he should never have married me —"

"Married you, uncle?" exclaimed Oliver.

"Well, I have taken the cork out at last, and I may as well let the whole run out now. You must know that, before Mrs. Wellmont came to live with me, I was getting to be one of the loneliest bachelors in the world. Some days, the blues were so thick around me, all I could do was to sleep and smoke. I had no heart even to play with Sati, or go out and look at my creatures. But when she came things changed at once. She is such a nice, sensible woman, I took a world of comfort talking with her, and reading to her from my History of Waterbury. She is always interested in all that I am; and, what's more, she thinks of the *doctors* just as I do." The major said this with a keen satisfaction. "I know certain," he continued, "because she was taken sick once, and I said nothing and offered to send for a doctor, but she would not permit it. Then I felt that my fate was decided."

The major paused, and coughed violently.

"This is news, as good as unexpected!" now spoke Edith.

"Is the lady willing?" asked Oliver of his uncle.

"I have put *the* question, and she says she will never feel justified in marrying me without the consent of Edith, to whom she owes so much, and of him who is to be her husband. These are her very words," said the major. "So this is my business with you both, at present; though I think it is unnecessary, for I have arranged things so that all my property will fall to you, when we are both dead, save a few legacies. I did not intend to help you when a boy, Hugh, because I had an idea that I myself should have been a great man, like some of our ancestors, if I had been obliged to set out in life without a dollar."

"I think," said Hugh, "this contemplated marriage of yours is a most sensible arrangement; and we will all consider it as settled, if you please."

Edith went for Mrs. Wellmont, to offer her hearty congratulations.

And so, that evening, there was a double marriage. The clergyman who officiated on the occasion was the one whom Edith had persuaded her uncle to hear.

Directly after the ceremonies had been performed, Edith's uncle asked to be heard for a few minutes.

"I have a confession to make," he began, in his usual manner, "and, as a priest is here, I shall expect him to shrive me, though what I have to say is to those whom I have sinned against. Ever since I was sick it has been on my mind, and now I must make a clean breast of it. In the first place,

from the time I discovered myself to you, Dithy, I have been guilty of lying, almost every word I have spoken."

Edith began to conclude that her uncle had suddenly lost his senses.

"But I thought I had a good reason," he continued; "for when I returned home to this country, as you know, Dithy, I first went to my sister, and she received me coldly, because she thought I was not wealthy. I was so wounded, I determined on trying another experiment. I said I would see if all my relatives had only a love which could be bought and sold. So I found you out, and I tried you in every way I could think of. You stood the test nobly. I felt so much pity for you, when you lost your law-case, I had a mind to whisper a word of comfort in your ear. But I was prevented by two reasons: one was, I had a curiosity to see how your religion would carry you through such a trying time; and I also wanted to prove whether your husband, that is now, would seek you again after you had lost all your prospects of a fortune. Both of you exceeded my expectations. Your religion, Dithy, which I once lightly regarded, I now solemnly declare I truly reverence; for something more than human strength must have enabled you to conduct with such faith and fortitude through the severe trials of your young life. That this grace may be mine henceforth, to fit me for life and death, shall be my daily prayer. Both of you, my dear children, have proved yourselves worthy of my entire confidence. And, for your love and kindness to me,

when I appeared only a poor, old, troublesome creature, you shall be rewarded with something more valuable."

He paused, to brush the tears from his eyes.

"What!" exclaimed Edith, "are you not destitute, uncle?"

"No, child, if being the sole possessor of at least a half-million can entitle me to any other name. What I now say is true. I hope all my deceptions will be forgiven. I was not lame, even, as I pretended, though, since leaving my sick bed, I am so weak, I am in reality unable to walk firmly now. I thought, if I pretended to be so poor, and did not work more actively, I should be as an offence even to the best-hearted; so I resorted to the appearance of partial incapacity. I had not much conscience then about such things, when I had an end of so much importance in view; though I have ever been an honest man in all my dealings with the world, and whatever is mine has been rightly obtained. I believe all my pretensions succeeded. When I displayed to you, Dithy, those 'curious stones' which I had brought home with me, I saw, at a glance, that you took me at my word. But they were diamonds and other precious stones. The large red one is a ruby of great value.

"While I was sick, you remember, Dithy," he continued, "that, on summoning a gentleman of my acquaintance to my bedside, I requested you to leave me during the interview. Then I caused you to be legally recorded as the heir of all my estate, providing, in case of my death, that you should allow a moderate annuity to your aunt and her children during

their lives; for I have ascertained that their once handsome fortune is nearly all wasted. Regleton will soon die of delirium tremens, and the son is too dissipated to long survive his father. While I live I shall take care that my sister and her children do not suffer."

Had a meteoric stone fallen in the centre of that room, there could not have been more surprise depicted on the countenances of the listeners to this singular development.

"I think, sir," spoke the clergyman, at length, "that you deceived me once scarcely less perfectly than you have others, when you came to me, upon the conclusion of a Sabbath service, and gave me what you said were prayers and charms of some heathen nations. On returning home, I found the 'heathen prayers and charms' were all bank-notes. I hope it is not unseasonable to make this statement; but, as confession seems the order of the occasion, perhaps I may be permitted to 'confess' my grateful acknowledgments."

"Since I have taken to reading the Bible, of late," returned the old gentleman, "I find that among the trespass-offerings of the Philistines were five golden mice; and, as I have trespassed against you in this deception, I will now make you an offering, though in material only, corresponding to the mice."

He gave the clergyman a purse of gold.

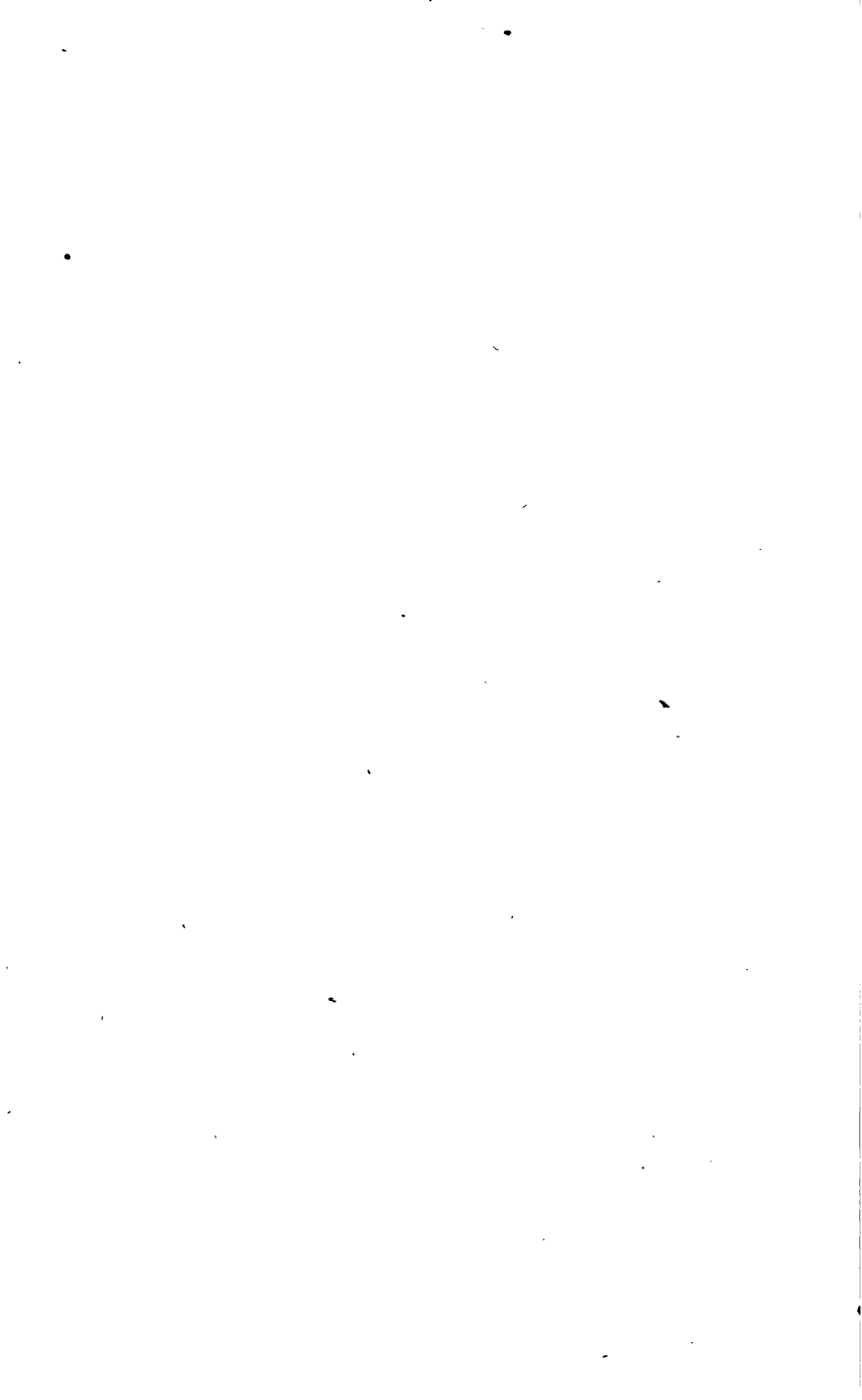
"Allow me to say that there is one truth which I derive from what I have heard here this evening," observed the clergyman; "it is ever the best course to act from principle, instead of self-interest."

"Then," continued Major Oliver, "we stand a good chance to get back both principal and interest."

"Yes," replied the clergyman, "I think that has been clearly proved here on this occasion."

All assented to the truth of this precept in their hearts, but none more truly than the mother of the dead, who had once been actuated by another and more worldly motive.





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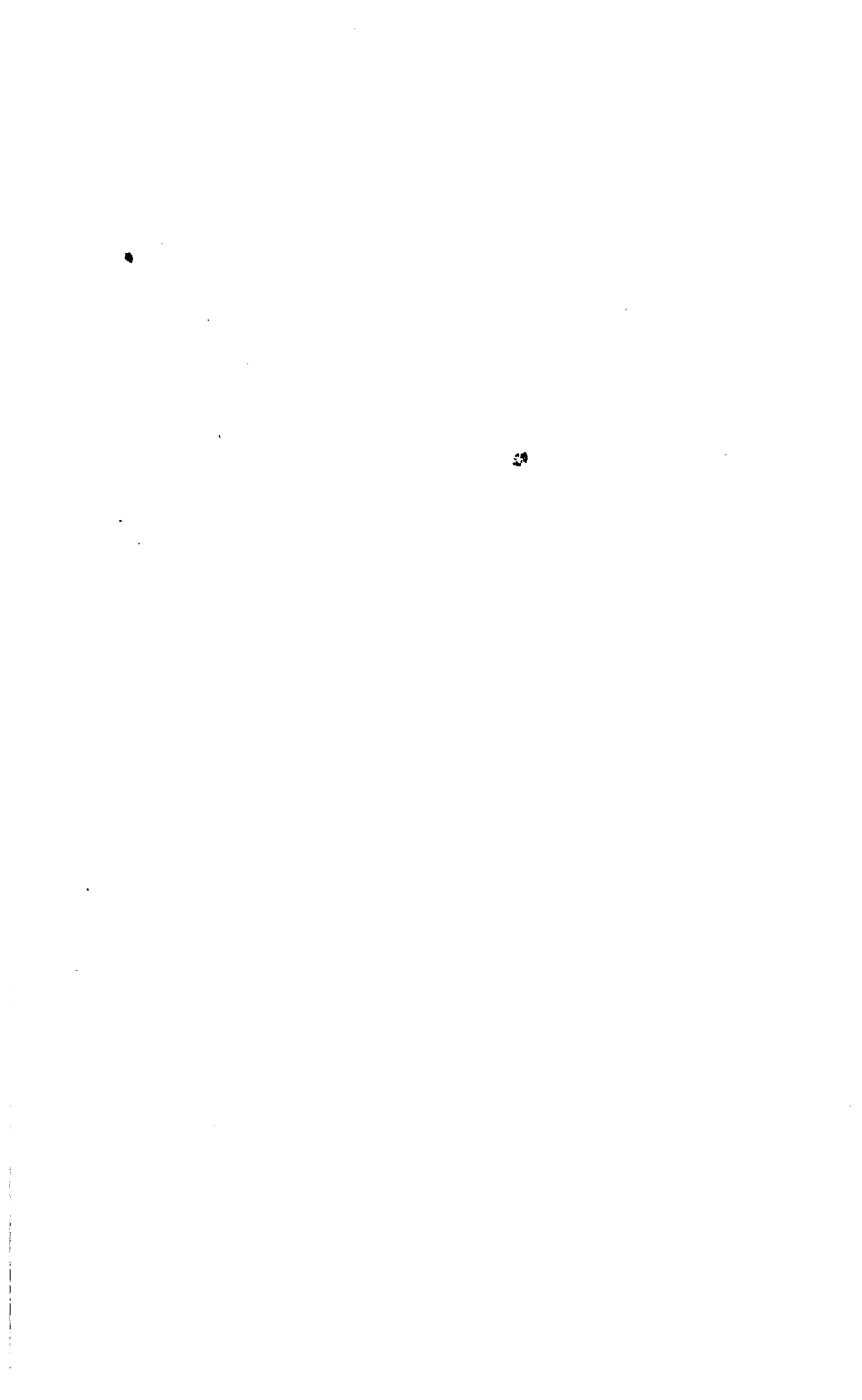
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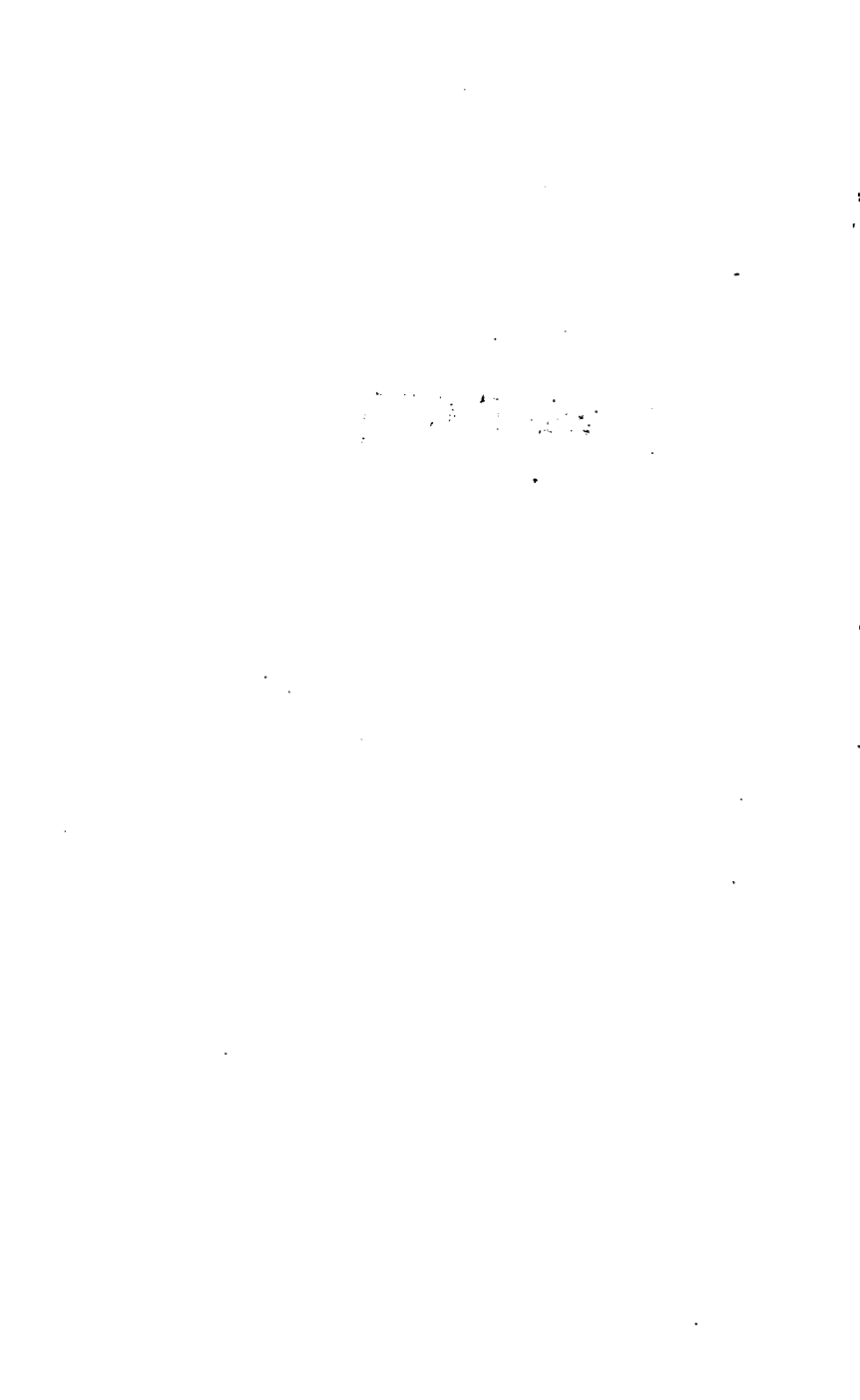
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